THE 'RESPECTABLES' AND THE 'ROUGHS': SUBJECTIVITY AND CLASS IN THE ACADEMY AND VICTORIAN WOMEN'S WRITING

By

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"We think back through our mothers if we are women."

--Virginia Woolf

I dedicate this dissertation to two strong, inspiring women: to my mother, who, upon my request, tirelessly read Victorian novels to me when I was only three and four years old, and who will always be, in my eyes, if not the eyes of the world, a talented artist, writer, and fashion designer; and to Mrs. Magda, my eighth-grade English teacher, who warned me that throughout my life there would be people who would tell me that I couldn't write; she made me promise that I would never listen to them and that I would never, ever stop writing.

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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This study reads the academy as a cultural text, examining its class structure--the way it functions as what Althusser terms an Ideological State Apparatus--within the context of current debates on multiculturalism, canon construction, and curricular transformation. Although discourses of multiculturalism and the "trinity" of class, race, and gender seem to circulate "freely" in the academy, such discourses do not have the power to transform the capitalist structure of the academy itself, which impedes access for poor and working-class people. Even the important work of feminism in reconstructing the literary canon has yet to bring the voices of many poor and working-class women into the canon or the classroom.

Drawing upon the work of M. M. Bakhtin, Pierre Bourdieu, Louis Althusser and Antonio Gramsci, this study

examines class-biased constructions of the literary canon and the academy itself, constructions that uphold standards of "respectability" and "roughness" inherited from Victorian culture. Because these standards have been "interpellated" culturally, they create the illusion of class homogeneity while maintaining and policing rigid class boundaries; certain multiculturalist, literary critical, and historical discourses of the academy reinscribe these standards by failing to take the materiality and complexity of class into account.

This project re-materializes class subjectivity by exposing the class structure of the academy and its effect on embodied subjects while identifying a number of forgotten texts--the autobiography and fiction of Margaret Oliphant, a Victorian writer from a lower middle-class background, and the autobiographies and fiction of several lower middle-class and/or working-class Victorian women writers such as Isabella Fyvie Mayo, Mary Linskill, Elizabeth Mary Parker, and Marianne Farningham. This study places these writers' absence from the canon within the political context of the academy's effacement of the materiality and complexity of class subjectivity as well as within a theoretical and practical re-materialization of that complexity.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

> 'Just because you are paranoid doesn't mean they are not out to get you'. . . . There is one of me and many of them. (Stetson 127)
>
> Universities are established to keep people like me out, and to keep middle- and upper-class people in. (Kadi 92-3)
>
> There is a dirty little secret in America. . . . [I]t is class [and the] . . . important realities of class experience. (Parenti 55)
>
> 'If you don't believe me,' as Upton Sinclair wrote in a study of the universities and the ruling class more than fifty years ago, 'just come along and let me show you--not merely the skeleton of the beast, but the nerves and the brains, the blood and the meat, the hide and the hair, the teeth and the claws of it.' (Smith 15)

If Joanna Kadi seems "paranoid" about her access to the academy, it's because she is. If Kadi, an Arab Canadian lesbian from a working-class background, claims that universities are established for the middle and upper classes, that they "are designed to make working-class people *feel* like we don't belong" (92, emphasis mine), it is primarily because classism, as an actual *material* force, has created in her that feeling of not belonging. Her feeling of "paranoia"---her view that the academy is not accessible to her, that it is like a "beast" with teeth and claws which "keep[s] people like [her] out"--is based upon the

"important realities" of her race, class, sexual orientation, and gender experiences in the academy. These "realities" are of a bodily, *material* kind--they exist more than in theory--and cannot be explained in solely theoretical, abstract terms. And despite the popularity of "what Brook Thomas [has] dubbed the 'new trinity of class, race, and gender' (200)" (Langland 18) in the academy, these "realities" deserve more extensive investigation in academic scholarship, especially as they relate to current debates on multiculturalism, canon construction, and curricular transformation in the academy.

Yet the moment that one begins to speak of "material forces," of "realities" and "experiences" that are of a "bodily, material" kind, certain difficulties arise that must be addressed first before any further investigation can take place; after all, these are all theoretically vexed issues, ones that poststructuralist theory, in all its myriad forms, has taken up in recent years. Before being able to clarify what I mean by the term "material," I must then necessarily position my reading of it within the context of current debates circulating in poststructuralist circles, for while the term "class" certainly hints at what I mean by "material forces," the term itself is also implicated in these debates. The work of Teresa Ebert will be helpful here, as she clarifies a distinction between two

key "clusters" of postmodern theory: "ludic postmodernism" and "resistance postmodernism" (887).

Ebert defines "ludic postmodernism" as the form used by those who "address reality as a theatre for free-floating play (hence the term 'ludic') of images, disembodied signifiers and differences," and she points to the work of Derrida, Baudrillard, and Lyotard as exemplative of this "cluster" (887). Their work, she claims, results in a sort of "rhetorical or textual politics aimed at obscuring prevailing meanings and disrupting the oppressive totality of what Lyotard calls 'cultural policy'" (887). However, this "textual politics," she contends, ultimately ends up "dismantling the notion of politics itself as a transformative social practice outside language" because of its deconstruction of "grand narratives" such as "emancipation," of "identities" such as race, gender, sexual orientation, and class, and of "the referent" and "experience as unfounded and divided by difference" (887).

Drawing her linguistic theory, not from Saussure, as do the "ludic postmodernists," but from Bakhtin and Voloshinov, Ebert articulates the other "cluster"--"resistance postmodernism"--as a form of postmodern theory "that views the relation between word and world, language and social reality or, in short, 'difference,' not as the result of textuality but as the effect of social struggles" (887); as such, this form of postmodern theory, she contends, is able

to "build a new socially transformative politics of emancipation and freedom from gender, race, and class exploitation" because it "insists on a *materialist* political practice that works for equal access for all to social resources and for an end to the exploitative exercise of power" (887, emphasis mine).

Ebert's reference here to "materialist" practice and "social resources" begins to address what I mean by the "material realities" of race, class, sexual orientation, and gender "experience" that women like Kadi face, "realities" that affect these women's "access" to the academy. When Ebert uses the term "social resources" she moves closest to my emphasis on the "material," which I define as those forms of "capital"--economic, educational, cultural, social, symbolic, scientific, to use Pierre Bourdieu's terms--that provide people access to those "social resources"[1] and thus to a particular "class" positioning. Daniel O'Hara, utilizing Jon Elster's modification of Marx's definition of "class," argues that a "class" appears as "a collective actor on the historical scene" because of its members' "endowments," which are basically "what people possess or own: some means of economic and/or cultural production and reproduction" (417).

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[1] These "social resources" might include, but are not limited to, housing, food, a safe physical environment, healthcare, education, employment, clothing, and other necessities for maintaining bodily, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

What I term "material forces," then, are these very "means of economic and/or cultural production and reproduction," as well as whatever "forces" impede access to such "means." Because various forms of "capital" other than "economic"--differing forms of knowledge (educational, scientific, cultural), modes of physical behavior, mannerisms, speech--all serve, along with "economic" capital, to "purchase"[2] what Bourdieu terms a "habitus," it is impossible to separate the "material"--the economic, the physical, the bodily--from the "symbolic" or the "historical." As John Fiske explains, especially under conditions of oppression--and I would define these as sexism, classism, racism, homophobia, ageism, ableism, and other forms that restrict peoples' access to social resources--"social experience and, therefore, culture is inescapably material" (155). "The culture of everyday life," he contends, is "concrete, contextualized, and lived,

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[2] While I am aware that for Bourdieu a "habitus" is largely unchosen, I utilize this play on "purchase" to imply that a certain level of agency *is* involved. As Patti Lather notes, for many postmodern feminists, the "subject" is neither a "romanticized individual" nor a mere "pawn of social determinants"; instead, it can be theorized in "ways that offer hope for sustained contestation and resistance" (131). Perhaps not so much as children, but certainly as adults, people have *some* control over a "habitus" through the various capitals that create it. One can, to a certain extent, reject, give away, acquire, or share the forms of capital needed to construct a particular habitus. For interesting analyses of these possibilities, see Irena Klepfisz's "The Distances Between Us: Feminism, Consciousness and the Girls at the Office: An Essay in Fragments" and Julie Caniglia's "Lifestyles of the Privileged Poor."

just as deprivation is concrete, contextualized, and lived. It is, therefore, a particularly difficult object of academic investigation" (155).

Thus, to investigate the "everyday" experiences of women like Kadi and the "deprivation" entailed in these experiences, as well as how those experiences create a valid "paranoia" concerning the academy, is "difficult" without insisting upon a "materiality" that is not separate from "symbolic" or "historical" forces. Fiske provides an excellent description of Bourdieu's "habitus," one that is crucial to my definition of such "materiality," and thus it is worth quoting at length:

> The concept 'habitus' contains the meanings of habitat, habitant, the processes of habitation and habit, particularly habits of thought. A habitat is a social environment in which we live: it is a product of both its position in the social space and of the practices of the social beings who inhabit it. The social space is, for Bourdieu, a multidimensional map of the social order in which the main axes are economic capital, cultural capital, education, class, and historical trajectories; in it, the material, the symbolic, and the historical are not separate categories but interactive lines of force whose operations structure the macro-social order, the practices of those who inhabit different positions and moments of it, and their cultural 'tastes,' ways of thinking, of 'dispositions. . . . The position in social space, the practices and identities are not separate categories in a hierarchal and deterministic relation to one another, but mutually inform one another. (155)

I believe that Ebert's call for "a materialist political practice that works for equal access for all to social resources and for an end to the exploitative exercise

of power" can only be enacted at those "interactive lines of force," which Bourdieu points to as constituative of the "habitus"--"the material, the symbolic, and the historical," whose very "operations structure the macro-social order." Ebert believes, and I agree with her, that "ludic" postmodernism alone is not capable of such "a materialist political practice," for as Jennifer Cotter points out, this "ludic" theory "understands the 'material' to be a process that is an 'effect' of discursive production ['symbolic' production alone], open to 'intervention' at the level of (re)signification through the 'deconstruction' of contradictions located at the site of cultural representation" (226). But whether such "'intervention'" can actually transform the "structure [of] the macro-social order"--a transformation necessary to achieving the "equal access" Ebert calls for--is indeed questionable, given that the "macro-social order" involves a class structure, and, as Cotter notes, "'class' is not simply a congealment of discourses, but a structural relation that cannot be renegotiated through 'subversive repetition' or 'reversibility'" alone (230).

Ebert and Cotter are not, of course, the first feminist critics to point to problems with the way "ludic" postmodern theory defines the "material." Many others have criticized such theory, especially for its "handling" of the body. Because the "material" is inextricably linked up with the

body, it will be useful to turn briefly to this issue. Susan Bordo argues that "[i]f the body is a metaphor for our locatedness in space and time and thus for the finitude of human perception and knowledge, then the postmodern body is no body at all" (145). Bordo is referring here to the "ludic" postmodernist preoccupation that Cotter notes: that emphasis on the "material" as "a process that is an 'effect' of discursive production" that is open to "intervention" (226) through discursive "'subversive repetition' or 'reversibility'" (230). Bordo argues that through "paradox, inversion, self-subversion, facile and intricate textual dance" such readings are "continually 'slip-slidin' away'" (144). While it is one thing, she contends, to "deny the unity and stability of identity," it is another to indulge in "[t]he epistemological fantasy of *becoming* multiplicity--the dream of limitless multiple embodiments, allowing one to dance from place to place and self to self" (145). Bordo asks, "What sort of body is it that is free to change its shape and location at will, that can become anyone and travel anywhere?" (145); Ebert would answer: a body that is not *material*, that has unlimited "access to [all] social resources," that is not subject to "the exploitative exercise of power" in our culture; in short, a body that is not a body.

Such a body, or embodied subject, does not "live" in any context, any social "habitus," but rather, lives only in

the symbolic, in discourse. As Carol Bigwood argues, "the poststructuralist body is contextualized only as a place marker in quasi-linguistic systems of signifiers. It is so fluid that it can take on almost limitless embodiments. It has no real terrestrial *weight*" (59). It is such material "weightiness" that I want to reintroduce into postmodernist debates over embodied subjects, for it is this "weightiness" that is too often absent in the academic scholarship concerned with the "trinity of class, race, and gender," a "trinity" currently popular in fields such as Literature, Cultural Studies, and Women's Studies.

What has made this "trinity" so "weightless"? As Cora Kaplan explains, "there is [often] a gap between what people *think* they are doing, and what they are actually doing, and it is important to think about what happens in that gap" (164, emphasis mine). While there may be a recent proliferation of "class, race, and gender" in the academy, we ought to keep in mind Kaplan's point that class, like race and gender, "is 'made' and 'lived' in both conscious and unconscious registers through a variety of languages and practices at any given point in history" (164). At this "point in history," the academy's "languages," its *discourses* of "class, race, and gender"--even those that appear to be "materially" based--may very well be distanced from, while still a part of, the material "class, race, and gender" *practices* of the academy, "practices" that I, along

with a number of feminist and liberal-left scholars, contend are still exclusionary[3] and thus cause the "paranoia" of women such as Kadi. Such discourses, then, while part of the production of these "practices," might also be implicated in the "gaps" between what "people think they are doing"--the theory--and what people "are actually doing"--the praxis.

At least in theory and in academic discourse, "class, race, and gender," like their counterparts--"multiculturalism" and "diversity"--have indeed swept the academy, to the extent that political ultra-conservatives

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[3] The following list provides a sample of such scholarship, but it is by no means all-inclusive: *Working-class Women in the Academy: Laborers in the Knowledge Factory*, edited by Michelle M. Tokarcyzyk and Elizabeth A. Fay; selections from *Gendered Subjects: the Dynamics of Feminist Teaching*, edited by Margo Cully and Catherine Portuges, especially Adrienne Rich's "Taking Women Students Seriously," Erlene Stetson's "Pink Elephants: Confessions of a Black Feminist in an All-white, Mostly Male English Department of a White University Somewhere in God's Country," Judith McDaniel's "Is There Room for Me in the Closet? Or My Life as the Only Lesbian Professor," and Elizabeth V. Spelman's "Combating the Marginalization of Black Women in the Classroom"; selections from *Too Much Schooling, Too Little Education: A Paradox of Black Life in White Societies* edited by Mwalimu J. Shujaa; selections from *Minorities in Higher Education*, edited by Manuel J. Justiz, Reginald Wilson, and Lars G. Björk; Nadya Aisenberg and Mona Harrington's *Women of Academe: Outsiders in the Sacred Grove*; the British study of women in higher education, *Is Higher Education Fair to Women?*, edited by Sandra Acker and David Warren Piper; *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy*, edited by Carmen Luke and Jennifer Gore; Lynn Weber Cannon et al.'s "The Costs of Exclusionary Practices in Women's Studies"; María de la Luz Reyes and John J. Halcón's "Racism in Academia: the Old Wolf Revisited"; Estella Mara Bensimon's "Lesbian Existence and the Challenge to Normative Constructions of the Academy"; and bell hook's *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*.

have become "paranoid": Pat Buchanan, for example, is driven to insist emphatically that "Judeo-Christian values" will *not* be "dumped into some landfill called multiculturalism" if he and his followers can help it (Macedo 91); and as Michael Parenti notes, along with Buchanan are numerous other "ultra-rightists who claim that liberals, Jews, labor leaders, communists, feminists, and homosexuals have taken over and are [thus] undermining the fabric of America" (170). Dinesh D'Souza argues in his book, *Illiberal Education: The Politics of Race and Sex on Campus*, that "[t]he transformation of American campuses is so sweeping that it is no exaggeration to call it an academic revolution" (2), and he terms this revolution a "victim's revolution" 17), claiming that phrases like "[d]iversity, tolerance, multiculturalism, pluralism" are now "perennially on the lips of university administrators" (17).

Such words may indeed be "on the lips of university administrators," but how many administrators and how "perennially" are certainly debatable questions. As Katherine Bartlett points out, "[c]ertain voices are being heard in the university more often, more loudly, and more insistently than before," and she explains that "[g]iven what we are accustomed to hearing from these voices--silence--the noise is deafening" for ultra-conservatives (327). Their "paranoia," then, is hardly based in the "important realities" of women's lives like Kadi's or in the

very different "paranoia" they face. These critics of multiculturalism would hardly understand these women's "realities" and their "paranoia"; nor, however, can they be completely explained by what Kobena Mercer refers to as that "all-too-familiar mantra" ("Welcome" 58): the "class, race, and gender" discourse of the academy.

What slippage is occurring, then, between these women's "realities" and those expressed in the discourses that currently circulate in the academy or in the media? These discourses seem so disparate, including ultra-conservative, anti-"PC" ones that bemoan the multiculturalist takeover of the universities; discourses of "multiculturalism" that rely on notions of "access" and "equality" to propagate the assumption that a "diversity" of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, age, ability, and other subjectivities[4] are now hard-won givens in the academy; and "multiculturalist" discourses that are used to theorize curriculum and canon, without necessarily having any impact upon the actual bodies present in or absent from the academy. What creates this

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[4] I prefer this term versus "identity" because, as critical pedagogy theorists Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren note, "identity" implies a fixed, unitary subject, whereas "subjectivity" acknowledges the role of self-understanding--the way "individuals make sense of their experiences"--as well as the role of cultural forms which constrain or enable such understandings (14). "Subjectivity" also addresses the heterogeneity of identity, and "the fact that individuals consist of a decentered flux of subject positions" which are dependent upon "discourse, social structure, repetition, memory, and affective investment" (14-15). See Chapters Two and Three for more discussion of subjectivity, especially its relation to cultural constructions of class.

slippage between what right-wing "paranoid" discourses and certain "multiculturalist" discourses have in common--the perpetuation of a steadfast belief in the "sweeping" change towards diversity in the academy--and the "paranoia" felt by women such as Kadi, women who see themselves as struggling against forces which are "sweeping" them and others like them right out of the academy? What could be missing from "multiculturalism" which might explain Kadi's "paranoia" and the experiences of exclusion generating such "paranoia"?

As Parenti points out, part of what is missing is the *class* aspect of these experiences, for class is such a "dirty little secret" (55) in our culture. "The expressions of *class* bigotry in our films and television, and in our institutions and daily lives remain largely unexamined, as do most of the more important realities of class experience" (Parenti 55). These material "realities" of "class experience" are the very ones that tend to drop out of the theorized race, class, gender triad in the academy; class, as distinct from, impacting upon, or deriving from race and gender (as well as other aspects of identity), has become literally de-materialized in some academic scholarship, oftentimes through the very medium of "multiculturalist" discourse that *seems* to emphasize class. Scholars such as Parenti and Kaplan, however, as well as others like Elizabeth V. Spelman, bell hooks, Teresa Ebert, Raymond Williams, Henry Giroux, Peter McLaren, Michele Wallace,

Teresa DeLauretis, Kathleen Weiler, and Donald Macedo, to name a few, resist such a de-materialization of class in their work and instead point out and explain such de-materialization in the academy, as well as in our culture in general. And they ask hard questions of those critics who enact such a de-materialization. For example, Carmen Luke asks postmodernist theorists of critical pedagogy,

> [i]n terms of that oppressed triad--race, class, gender--how will critical and dialectical thinking, expressions of subjectivity and cultural experience, and a language of critique transform the real material conditions of, for instance, inner-city girls and women of color . . . ? (36)

To address such "real material conditions," many of these scholars rely upon the work of class theorists like Pierre Bourdieu, Louis Althusser, and Antonio Gramsci. As Daniel O'Hara points out, their reliance is the exception rather than the rule, for "despite today's rote invocations of 'class' in the catchphrase 'race, class, and gender,' American criticism in particular has generally not kept in contact with . . . [post-Marxist] revisions in the theory of class" (406). Yet it is just such revisions that can help to explain the "paranoia" of women like Kadi and what is missing from "multiculturalism" that has served to perpetuate the "real material conditions" behind that "paranoia." Part of the problem, of course, has been that the "ludic" postmodernist emphasis on textualization and discursive "play" has translated too often into a multiculturalist emphasis restricted to issues of the canon

--to the "texts" of the academy--rather than a focus on the raced, classed, and gendered embodied subjects of the academy. But as John Guillory points out, "[t]he canon itself is an historical event; it belongs to the history of the school" (244). Looking at that "history," especially as it has occurred within capitalism, is extremely important for formulating a means of enacting Ebert's call for a "transformative, materialist postmodern feminism" (888), a feminism that can "articulate the social struggles in which difference is inscribed in order to activate old and new sites of resistance, opposition, and change" (889). These "sites" can then effectively address the "paranoia" of women like Kadi.

Louis Althusser's work on ideology will be helpful in examining the academy as a site with particular "material conditions," as a social "habitus" that functions to include and exclude certain embodied subjects, because the academy reproduces the capitalist class structure of our society through both its structure and the various forms of ideology it reinscribes. James Kavanagh explains that in a comtemporary Marxist framework such as that offered by Althusser's revisions of Marxist theory,

> ideology designates a rich 'system of representations,' worked up in specific material practices, which helps form individuals into social subjects who 'freely' internalize an appropriate 'picture' of their social world and their place in it. Ideology offers the social subject not a set of narrowly 'political' ideas but a fundamental framework of assumptions that

> defines the parameters of the real and the self; it constitutes what Althusser calls the social subject's '"lived" relation to the real.' (310)

As Kavanagh explains, "[i]deological analysis in literary or cultural study" concerns itself primarily with the "institutional and/or textual apparatuses that work on the reader's or spectator's imaginary conceptions of self and social order in order to call or *solicit*"--in Althusser's terms, "interpellate"--"him/her into a specific form of social 'reality' and social 'subjectivity'" (310). The academy is itself one of these "institutional apparatuses" that work on conceptions of self through the process of "interpellation." As Althusser explains, "it is bourgeois ideology, bourgeois 'culture,' which is in power, which exercises 'hegemony'" ("Philosophy" 16), and that ideology must be "reproduced" in a capitalist society.

In early capitalist societies, this reproduction occurred primarily through the means of production, but in late capitalist societies, such as that of the United States, the reproduction "is achieved more and more outside production: by the capitalist education system, and by other instances and institutions" ("Ideology" 132). Althusser terms these institutions "Ideological State Apparatuses" (ISAs), arguing that they function "massively and predominantly by ideology, but they also function secondarily by repression, even if ultimately, but only ultimately, this is very attenuated and concealed, even

symbolic" ("Ideology" 145). He contends that "what the bourgeoisie has installed as its number-one, i.e. as its dominant ideological State apparatus, is the educational apparatus," which has replaced the Church in that role ("Ideology 154-5). Thus, the academy, and the educational system in this country in general, is, according to Althusser, the dominant reproducer of bourgeois ideology, and it works most effectively because it is presented as "a neutral environment purged of ideology" ("Ideology 156).

One consequence of the debates surrounding multiculturalism has been the problematization of that myth of "neutrality"; however, it is those academics who are liberal and left-of-center--the proponents of multiculturalism--who are viewed as having an "ideology." Prior to the advent of "multiculturalism," the ultra-conservative myth goes, the academy was indeed "neutral" and objective. Althusser reminds us, however, that the academy never was neutral, that it always has functioned to reproduce the capitalist system, which includes, of course, excluding certain classed, raced, and gendered embodied subjects from the academy in order to keep them in a certain place in the class hierarchy of labor. Thus, even when discourses of multiculturalism and the "trinity" of "class, race, and gender" seem to circulate "freely" in the academy, those discourses do not have the "revolutionary" power to transform the capitalist structure of the academy itself.

It is still a site of reproduction of the very ideology that operates against multiculturalisms. As Weiler notes, Bourdieu argues that the "valued school knowledge is, in fact, the cultural knowledge of the bourgeois class" (10), but "the school's 'relative autonomy enables it to serve external [hegemonic] demands under the guise of independence and neutrality,'" thereby concealing its reproduction of the class structure (10). Thus, the educational ISA "reproduces existing class structure" in particular through the "cultural capital" it deems valuable--bourgeois "cultural capital" that poor and working-class students cannot easily access.

Weiler justly criticizes Althusser's work, however, for not considering the "actual processes by which social reproduction is achieved" (9) and Bourdieu's for not addressing the "actual experience of schooling or teaching," for presenting students and teachers as "passive parts of the process of reproduction" (11). She turns to Gramsci's theory of hegemony and counter-hegemony, for "in his formulation hegemony is never complete, [it is] always in the process of being reimposed and always capable of being resisted by historical subjects" (17). This "resistance" is the element that Ebert wants to include in feminist postmodernism, but it is a "resistance" that cannot be achieved solely through discursive "ludic" intervention, for that intervention serves to de-materialize class.

Wallace expresses a concern shared by a number of scholars over this de-materialization of class (as well as of other aspects of subjectivity):

> Many individual events on the current cultural landscape conspire to make me obsessed with contemporary debates over 'multiculturalism'. . . but my concern is grounded first and foremost in my observation of the impact of present *material conditions* on an increasing sector of the population. These material conditions, which include widespread homelessness, joblessness, illiteracy, crime, disease (including AIDS), hunger, poverty, drug addiction, alcoholism, as well as the various habits of ill health, and the destruction of the environment are (let's face it) the myriad social effects of late multinational capitalism. (180, emphasis mine)

Peter McLaren shares "Wallace's conviction that . . . multiculturalism," with its popular theoretical focus on class, race, and gender, "cannot afford to have [its] connection to wider *material relations* occulted by [this] focus on theoretical issues divorced from the lived experience of oppressed groups" (194, emphasis mine). Very similar to Ebert's approach, McLaren brings what he terms a "critical" or "resistance" postmodernist perspective to bear on the issue of multiculturalism (200), particularly on "the discourse of multiculturalism" as it is used by both some liberals and conservatives in a sort of "politics of assimilation" (204), one in which "multiculturalism" and "diversity" melt down cultural difference through "the political ladling of the long-brewing 'melting pot'" (195). "Resistance postmodernism," he contends, through its deconstruction of "the discourse of multiculturalism,"

"unsettles such a notion of [melting pot] universal common humanity by exploring identity within the context of power, discourse, culture, experience, and historical specificity" (204).

McLaren's "resistance postmodernist" approach is useful for reading the academy as a cultural text, in particular for examining the ways in which class and the materiality of class are rendered invisible by the use of certain types of multiculturalist discourses circulating in the academy. As Parenti points out, there is a

> tendency to deal with race and gender while ignoring class [that] is manifested in universities and colleges across this nation. Courses and books designed to deal with distortions and omissions in literature, social science, and history usually focus on race and gender without much mention of class forces. Important and valuable battles have been waged on behalf of various multicultural programs and women's studies. But few, if any, schools offer comprehensive study programs in class struggle and class power, nor would such programs be treated as having a legitimate claim to academic standing. Rather, they would be dismissed as 'Marxist,' and therefore of no value. (137)

It is, I will argue, this rendering invisible of class in the academy that Parenti notes here, as well as a rendering invisible of the *materiality* of class, which has in turn rendered invisible a more thorough examination of the embodied subjects excluded by the academy, those who do not belong, those who are "kept out" by its very design--those like Kadi.

The chapters which follow seek both to explain and address Kadi's *materially* based "paranoia," as well as to heed bell hook's "call for a recognition of cultural diversity, a rethinking of ways of knowing, a deconstruction of old epistemologies" that occurs "concomitant[ly]" with "a demand that there be a transformation in our classrooms, in how we teach and what we teach" (*Teaching* 29-30), for only through these strategies can we "restore life" to what hooks refers to as "a corrupt and dying academy" (*Teaching* 30). Thus, in Chapter Two I deal not only with a deconstruction of certain "multiculturalist" discourses, but I also examine the prevailing myth of "classlessness" in our society that is reproduced through the two powerful ISAs of the educational system and the media. To begin Ebert's project of working "for access for all to social resources" I examine the class structure of the academy, exposing the way it is set up to impede such access for poor and working-class people, a set-up obscured by certain multiculturalist discourses operating in the academy. I heed Tony Bennett's call to "put policy into cultural studies," by including in this chapter

> hard statistical work calculated to make certain problems [classism, racism, sexism, ableism, and ageism in particular] visible in a manner that will allow them to surface at the level of political debate or to impinge on policy-making processes in ways which facilitate the development of administrative programs capable of addressing them. (32)

I problematize the notion that poor and working-class people have had significant access to the academy in recent decades, providing, on the contrary, substantial evidence that they have been excluded from the academy by material forces that are predominantly classist and racist.

In Chapter Three I identify certain "forgotten texts"--the autobiography and fiction of Margaret Oliphant, a Victorian woman writer from a lower middle-class background, and the autobiographies and fiction of several "working-class" Victorian women writers--and place their absence from the canon within the context of the academy's effacement of class. Asking why these writers have been left out of the canon--other middle-class women writers were not, nor, to a certain extent, were working-class male writers--I begin to examine "master discourses" of the academy, those of history in particular, which may have contributed to their absence. I critique what I recognize as an "Imperialist Middle" bias in constructions of Victorian social history by a number of historians, and begin the work of pinpointing those historians who have begun constructing a more complex class continuum, along which the subjectivities of the writers I identify might be positioned. Along with this continuum, I theorize a connection between the constructions of class during the nineteenth century and those operative today. The myth of "classlessness" in our culture, as well as the American Dream and the myth of upward mobility associated

with it, homogenize and simplify class, making class an issue of morality versus materiality. Using Pierre Bourdieu's and Reginia Gagnier's work, I clarify some of the complexities ignored by these myths. Discussing the "respectable"/"rough" dichotomy of middle- and working-class identity, as it relates to Victorian constructions of subjectivity as well as those currently operative in the academy and our culture in general, I demonstrate how materiality disrupts this dichotomy, exposing it as false. "Respectability" and "roughness," I contend, are class-identified categories that create the illusion of class homogeneity, maintain and police class boundaries, and perpetuate particular material, cultural, and social conditions; these categories also relate to the way in which universalized human traits of materiality become both gender- and class-identified. Thus, identification and analysis of the discourses of "respectability" and "roughness" are crucial steps towards re-materializing women's subjectivities in the academy.

In Chapter Four I analyze the way in which these discourses have been used to construct the subjectivity of the Victorian writer Margaret Oliphant. I detail the extensive revisions of Oliphant's autobiography by her editor, Annie Coghill, and subsequent literary critics, revisions that mute the "rough" or "working class" aspects of Oliphant's self-presentation in favor of a decorous,

"respectable" middle-class representation. I illuminate Coghill's editing process, discussing the "rough" elements she removed from the autobiography: Oliphant's "rough," extremely caustic remarks on others, her grief over the deaths of her children, especially that of her daughter, her suicidal thoughts and blasphemous upbraidings of God, her negative descriptions of her body, important material details concerning money and her work, certain "rough" aspects of her family life such as drunkenness and debt, her descriptions of the fights between her husband and her mother, as well as references to the editing process itself. I demonstrate that Oliphant's text as a complete manuscript is constructed in a way that makes visible both "working-class" and "middle-class" aspects of her subjectivity, as well as both "rough" and "respectable" aspects, thus demonstrating the complex interrelationship of gender and class. I link Coghill's reconstruction of Oliphant into the purely "respectable" middle-class lady with the homogenization and "normalization" of class subjectivity operative in the academy as well as with the politics of Oliphant's "position" in the literary canon, which has been, for the most part, a *lack* of position.

In Chapter Five I read the story of my own career in the academy in the context of several autobiographies and novels by "working-class" Victorian women in order to historicize the politics of the academy and feminist

criticism. Examining these writers' self-constructions, I demonstrate how their subjectivities exemplify the multiplicity, fluidity, and heterogeneity of class overlooked by some historians and literary critics. Relating how both my and their subjectivities have been constructed through the "respectable"/"rough" dichotomy, I examine the politics of inclusion and exclusion both in the academy and the literary canon. Demonstrating how recognition of working-class subjectivity is important to these autobiographers because of their emphasis on the need for role models for other working-class women, I relate that need to a discussion of the significance of role models for working-class women in the academy. I theorize "working-class" ways of reading in the context of the debate over women's ways of reading, noting how materiality functions as a site of value for "working-class" analysis of culture. I then analyze the fiction of three "working-class" Victorian women writers--Mary Linskill, Elizabeth Mary Parker, and Marianne Farningham--discussing the ways in which these writers employ various discourses, material discourses in particular, to deconstruct the "respectable"/"rough" dichotomy. I provide a brief reading of their works against those of middle-class Victorian women--*Jane Eyre*, *Adam Bede*, *Mary Barton*, and *North and South*--demonstrating how they seem to differ through their resistance to middle-class plot and character constructions.

I purposefully structure this chapter as an autobiographical narrative and deliberately include personal narrative throughout the dissertation to enact my own resistance to middle-class (and masculinist) values and norms. Using this narrative form and utilizing a discourse that is at times bodily and emotional are crucial, I feel, for exemplifying the importance of putting feminist theory into practice; I agree with Elspeth Probyn that when "[c]onceived of within the practices of subjectification, we can make our bodies count," we can "speak about how they are marked by gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class, and political geographies, as well as how they are owned and used theoretically and affectively" (122), thus "'bear[ing]' witness' to ourselves as theorists and to the times in which we live" (122). But I "bear witness," not as an individual classed body indulging in self-disclosure for my own "pleasure," but as a means of "bearing" the oppressive material "realities" of a collective community.

That I inscribe my own material gender and class subjectivity in this way, both here in this text and within the academy itself, is perhaps the most revolutionary act I can commit, short of resorting to more violent acts of disruption. Because I openly acknowledge my class background and engage in left-wing political action as a result of it--both inside and outside of the academy--rather than assimilate completely into the middle-class mold

required by the academy (an assimilation that many academicians from working-class backgrounds undergo), my *presence* in the academy is itself a transgression of class boundaries, a shifting and displacing of the rigid, homogenized constructions of class perpetuated in our culture, and certainly within the academy. This resistance includes a refusal to adhere to only one "respectable" academic "voice" in writing these chapters; instead, I try to include a plurality of "voices," some anecdotal, some "rough," perhaps even offensive to "bourgeois" standards of proper behavior and codes of appropriate disclosure of the self.

Such resistance to assimilation results, perhaps, in more violence to myself than to the academy; however, my class position has done and will continue to do violence to me, regardless of whether or not I attempt to hide my background and conform to the bourgeois values of the academy, which are alien and destructive to my sense of self. Choosing to write on class issues and to focus on working-class women's autobiography and fiction, however, reaffirms that which is familiar and supportive to my subjectivity. Thus, working to bring women writers like Oliphant, Linskill, Parker, and Farningham into the canon and to materialize their *presence* in the academy means working to materialize and validate my own subjectivity and that of other working-class women, including those inside

and outside of the academy. Because it is part of a more comprehensive project to transform the academy--to shape it into a place where working-class people *do* belong, which requires, as I argue in my Conclusion, concrete and viable policy changes--it is perhaps the most important work I have ever done.

CHAPTER 2
MATERIALIZING SUBJECTIVITY AND CLASS IN THE ACADEMY

> Despite the focus on diversity [in the academy], [despite] our desires for inclusion, many professors still teach in classrooms that are predominantly white [and middle class]. (hooks, *Teaching* 43)

> As backlash swells, as budgets are cut, as jobs become even more scarce, many of the progressive interventions that were made to change the academy, to create an open climate for cultural diversity are in danger of being undermined or eliminated. These threats should not be ignored. Nor should our collective commitment to cultural diversity change because we have not yet devised and implemented perfect strategies for them. To create a culturally diverse academy we must commit ourselves fully. . . . We cannot be easily discouraged. We cannot despair when there is conflict. Our solidarity must be affirmed by a shared belief in a spirit of intellectual openness that celebrates diversity, welcomes dissent, and rejoices in collective dedication to truth. (hooks, *Teaching* 33)

While the academy is more diverse than it was before the time when women, people of color, over-the-traditional-age students, and poor, working-class, and middle-class people gained *any* access, as bell hooks points out, it is still "predominantly white," and, I add, very middle to upper class. After all, if we apply Althusser's terms, the academy constitutes a rather powerful Ideological State Apparatus (ISA), and as such it functions in ways that reproduce the capitalist structure of our society, which requires that a large percentage of the labor force *not*

attain higher education.[1] The academy would seem to be set up, then, as working-class scholar Joanna Kadi claims it is: to keep most poor and working-class people out, and "to keep middle- and upper-class people in" (93). At an historical moment when a backlash against multiculturalism threatens the important gains towards diversity that feminist and liberal-left academics *have* attained, it is especially important to examine discourses of the academy that might undermine those gains; it is also crucial to look beneath such rhetoric at the actual *lack* of diversity in the academy, especially in terms of class, because class exploitation is used as a powerful reinforcement of other oppressions like racism, sexism, homophobia, ageism, and ableism--oppressions that destroy diversity by destroying human lives.

The most damaging discourses are, of course, those of the conservative right that depict multiculturalism as a totalitarian plot to take over and essentially destroy the *academy;* these discourses are aimed at dismantling "multiculturalism" altogether and are, not surprisingly, the most widely promulgated by the media. Less visible, however, are certain "multiculturalist" discourses circulating in the academy that are not grounded in a

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[1] See my Introduction for a discussion of the academy as an ISA.

consideration of class in any material, bodily sense[2] (and thus are problematic tools for exacting a class-based analysis of the academy as cultural text); these discourses tend to take the presence of certain gendered, raced, *and* classed bodies in the academy as a given, or at least as a free choice divorced from the material forces of sexism, racism, and poverty. Yet as I will demonstrate in this chapter, despite ultra-conservative claims to the contrary, these bodies have gained only a token presence in the academy, one that hardly constitutes true "diversity"; thus, discourses that assume such a comprehensive diversity might inadvertently serve to undermine what little of it does, in fact, exist.

It is important to note at the outset, however, that those who utilize these "multiculturalist" discourses are scholars who sincerely support and applaud diversity; they are certainly not the political ultra-conservatives who bemoan the fact that blacks and women have supposedly "taken over" the academy. They are not the critics of multiculturalism, who, as Barbara Ehrenreich explains, "include a flock of tenured conservative scholars" deriding multiculturalism as a "new menace," a "new McCarthyism" even, that "aims to toss out what it sees as the Eurocentric bias in education and replace Plato with Ntozake Shange and

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[2] See my Introduction for a discussion of the materiality of class.

traditional math with the Yoruba number system" (330). They are, in fact, the very people these critics of multiculturalism attack in a frenzy of liberal bashing; they are maligned as "moral ideologues," as "intolerant censors" who supposedly threaten "the quality of academic standards and the integrity of free intellectual inquiry" (Bartlett 328). As bell hooks explains, however, these scholars actually "belie[ve] in a spirit of intellectual openness that celebrates diversity, welcomes dissent, and rejoices in collective dedication to the truth" (*Teaching* 33).

It is in the interest of the "solidarity" hooks calls for and in a "shared belief" in diversity (and thus in ensuring the *presence*, acknowledgement, and encouragement[3] of diverse classed, raced, and gendered embodied subjects in the academy), that I turn to an analysis of certain "multiculturalist" discourses encouraged by and operative in the academy. I analyze such discourses, especially those employed in texts that specifically focus on higher education and the subjects of such education, to reveal dangerous assumptions that might interfere with diversity, but I do so with the understanding that those who have

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[3] I emphasize "presence" here because without access to the academy in the first place, acknowledgement and empowerment are impossible; without such acknowledgment and empowerment, however, presence cannot be sustained. Jean F. O'Barr, in an article on re-entry women in the academy, makes a similar argument emphasizing "presence" as foremost: "access to education for women is the first goal and access to the curriculum is the second--without which the first will be a hollow victory" (101).

employed these discourses are part of a "collective commitment to cultural diversity," one that has, of course, included "[im]perfect strategies" (hooks, *Teaching* 33).

One such "strategy" occurs in multiculturalist discourse that assumes "choice" on the part of the subjects present in the academy or that renders the classed aspect of those subjects invisible. For example, *Teaching from a Multicultural Perspective*, a 1994 text written by and for scholars to "explore approaches that can lead to more successful teaching and learning in today's multicultural college or university classroom" (Gonzalez et al., vii), begins with the dangerous assumption that students from diverse cultural backgrounds simply *choose* whether or not to attend college: the introduction utilizes discourse which presents diversity or "change" in the academy as resulting from "choice": "our higher education institutions are undergoing profound *change*, driven primarily by the students *who choose to attend*" (vii, emphasis mine). The 1995 Women's Studies textbook, *Issues in Feminism: An Introduction to Women's Studies*, utilizes discourse in its introduction that ignores the absence of poor and working-class women in the academy through constructing race and ethnicity as the only underrepresented categories for women:

> Today, in this country, because it is illegal to bar women from admission to any public educational institution on the basis of sex, we are entering universities and professional schools in increasing numbers (although the numbers are still

> disproportionate *in terms of race and ethnicity*). (12, emphasis mine)

The "we" refers to women in general, but is obviously restricted to women of the middle and upper classes (except those poor and working-class women whose class subjectivity is subsumed under the discourse of "race and ethnicity"); yet the numbers of women in the academy are most certainly "disproportionate" in terms of class[4]--and for these women it is their poverty, not the law or their own "choice," which keeps them out of the academy.

Other multiculturalist discourse constructs women students in the academy, who now constitute a majority--"52% of all persons enrolled in college" (Pearson et al. 17)--as being an already *diverse* majority[5], for example, the

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[4] For example, less than 13% of all low-income high school graduates in 1982 entered a public four-year institution of higher education by 1986. That percentage virtually doubles, triples and quadruples as one goes up the class ladder of middle, upper-middle, and upper class students (Hauptman and Smith 86). In addition, only slightly above a third of these low-income students graduated with a Bachelor's degree within six years (Hauptman and Smith 91). The higher the income, the more likely it is that a student will attend college, whether two-year or four-year public institution or four-year private institution, and the more likely it is that a student will graduate (Hauptman and Smith 86-91).

[5] It is important to note that the essays in this anthology acknowledge the continuing sexism faced by this supposedly "diverse majority." In particular, they focus on the sexist treatment of women in the classroom, especially sexual harassment and undervaluing of women's issues, as well as campus rape and the way in which women are underrepresented in certain fields such as science and engineering. They also focus on racism, ableism, homophobia and other oppressions; however, classism is distinctly absent. This is particularly disturbing when it is not

discourse of "diversity" employed in *Educating the Majority: Women Challenge Tradition in Higher Education*: "today's women collegians are *diverse in terms of age, social class, race, ethnic group and religion*, each one bringing with her life experience and cultural heritages which enrich, and sometimes challenge, the prevailing culture" (Pearson et al. 17, emphasis mine). The following statement, like the one above, assumes that such "diversity" among women college students exists in terms of class; it acknowledges, however, that the text itself, in terms of "diversity" as a *topic*, fails to include class:

> Part One, then, focuses on women students in *all their complexity and diversity* as well as their commonalities. . . . [A]lthough we have tried to represent many different kinds of diversity from sexual orientation and disability to learning style, we could not recognize them all. Conspicuously absent, for example, is any consideration of the impact of different religious backgrounds and affiliations and the special problems of low-income women. (Pearson et al. 8, emphasis mine).

Perhaps the most "special problem" of low-income women in higher education, however, is not the *absence* of such women from discussion as part of the "diversity" of the academy, but rather their *absence* from the academy itself, an absence

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emphasized as a significant force restricting access to the academy for women of color, women with disabilities, and women above the traditional age. Some of the articles *do* mention class as a factor, but most downplay its importance in the interest of discussing the commonalities among the particular identity group discussed (Hispanic, Black, Disabled, Re-entry, etc.).

that tends to be obfuscated here by the multiculturalist discourse employed.

Some multiculturalist discourse tends to obscure the differences between the diversity of peoples of the world or of a local community and those present in the academy. Somehow through curriculum and canon these various sites and the embodied subjects inhabiting them are "woven" together magically in response to an already existing "diversity," as in the following example from the introduction to *Women of Color and the Multicultural Curriculum: Transforming the College Classroom*:

> Projects such as those [to diversify curriculum and canon] presented here propose that *diversity* is addressed effectively by *weaving* the excluded experiences of all members of the *global* society into the fabric of knowledge, course content, and *campus* climate. (Fiol-Matta 6, emphasis mine)

And again in a similar passage from that text, "community" and "college campus" and "college classroom" collapse into one site through an already present "diversity":

> Working in *diverse communities* requires methodologies and philosophies that must be rethought, taught, learned, and fostered. Ignoring this is tantamount to wishing to turn back the calendar to 'comfortable' days when certain people were 'college material' and others were not, when students and teachers who were victimized by attacks and slurs would take it quietly and disappear. The *college campus* and the *college classroom* are *by virtue of their diversity, community scenarios* for transformation. (7, emphasis mine)

The multiculturalist discourse of *presence* employed here--both an assumed presence of diverse embodied subjects and an

assumed presence in relation to present time (from which "the calendar" could be "turn[ed] back)--posits the dangerous assumption that in the here and now a diversity of students inhabits the academy; no longer are there "certain" people" who are not considered "'college material.'"[6] Students are constructed by this discourse as not only "diverse" in terms of their subjectivity, but also in terms of others' responses to it: they are no longer the victims of "attacks and slurs" against them.

Even if we turn to *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, we find this discourse of an assumed *presence* of diversity in two of the essays added to the new, 1995 edition; while these essays utilize terms such as "heterogeneous" and "heterogeneity" versus "diverse" or "diversity," both of them--one entitled "Class," the other, "Diversity"--seem to have been included because of their focus on "multiculturalism," a topic that, according to the editors, "reflect[s] recent developments in literary studies" (ix). Daniel T. O'Hara's "Class" acknowledges that the academy is "a class-divided workplace of the few critical 'stars' and the mass of intellectual drones"--a mass made up mostly "of

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[6] Unless standards of admission such as grade point average and SAT or GRE scores are being purposefully overlooked here, the assumption seems to be that in the here and now all "people" are potentially "college material" because they can *choose* to work hard enough--they are all assumed to have universal "access" to quality elementary and secondary education, which would prepare them to compete for admission into college.

adjuncts and graduate students [whom he] call[s] 'multicultural proles' because [their work focuses on issues of multiculturalism, and] they are, for the most part, a professional generation condemned to the worst conditions ever in the U.S. academy" (411); however, the discourse of the essay identifies class division as occurring in the "professoriate," but not among undergraduates.[7] Arguing that current hiring practices in literary studies involve "a multicultural distinction of some kind" (410), O'Hara writes,

> I don't think this is simply political correctness at work. Such a hiring pattern is part of a continuing sincere effort to make the professoriate more representative and more responsive to *the heterogeneous constituent groups of students it serves.* (410, emphasis mine)

This discourse assumes an already existent diversity--a heterogeneity--on the part of the students being "served"; the "professoriate" is meant, through certain hiring practices, to become "more representative," then, of an *already present* diversity.

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[7] In terms of the class division of the "professoriate," O'Hara fails to note the gender division that occurs within that division. Most of the "proles," or "proletariates," he identifies are *women.* As Mary Frank Fox points out, women instructors are located disproportionately in community colleges, where the workload is heaviest (230), "almost 30 percent of women [in colleges and universities] teach 13 hours or more per week, whereas only 15 percent of the men teach this much (230), and based on 1993 figures, only "49% of women compared to 70% of the men are tenured" (231).

Louis Menand's "Diversity," which provides a useful historical overview of "multiculturalism" and the academy, also employs a discourse of diversity *as presence*. Menand distinguishes between "meritocracy" and "multiculturalism," explaining that the former was a movement after World War II to admit people into college "on the basis of aptitude rather than income" (344), thus opening the floodgates of the university to poor, working-class, and middle-class people. He contends that "multiculturalism" inevitably grew out of "meritocracy" (345):

> once these formerly excluded, or underrepresented, groups *arrived on campus*, it was inevitable that questions should arise about the 'universality' of the curricula and the academic culture that had prospered happily for so long without them. 'Multiculturalism' is one response to those questions. Blind to race and gender, and culturally tone deaf [because it only addressed class], meritocracy is the egg from which multiculturalism has been hatched. (345, emphasis mine)

The diverse, "formerly excluded, or underrepresented, groups" are constructed in this discourse as already having "arrived on campus" by the time "multiculturalism" was "hatched" in the mid-1980s. Once these groups "arrived," they then raised "questions" pertaining to race, gender, and culture in terms of the "curricula" and "culture" dominant in the academy. In this rhetoric, these students' bodily *presence* was required for multiculturalism even to exist.

This discourse of "multiculturalism" as presence seems to function as the "egg" from which the following

problematic rhetoric is "hatched": Menand claims that on "many American campuses [today], white men are just one of several minorities" (344). I am tempted to ask, however, on which college campuses--mostly black private colleges who enroll only a handful of "white men"?--because if "white men" are only "one of several minorities," their "minority group" is still a significantly large, culturally and economically privileged one. (Very few poor and working-class white men even enter college--less than ten percent of them.) Referring to "white men" who are enrolled in college as a "minority group" is troublesome, given the class, race, and gender privilege that they wield; describing them as "one of several minorities" tends to efface the privilege they have in relation to other "minority groups," presumably white women and people of color. And the latter group certainly constitutes a much *smaller* presence on college campuses, a presence that *decreases* as one looks up the academic ladder, from freshmen through seniors to graduate students.

Not surprisingly, the essay itself begins with a definition of "diversity" that utilizes a discourse of presence:

> 'Diversity' is a term with no essential philosophical, political or aesthetic content. It simply states a fact, which is that people who write works of literature are different from one another, and so are people who read works of literature. The population of writers is composed of individuals, each with a particular history and a particular identity, and the population of

> readers is similarly heterogeneous. No one disputes this. (336)

This discourse presents "diversity" as simply present, as simply "a fact." But, of course, scholars *do* dispute the "this" referred to in the last sentence, especially since one-fifth of our population is functionally illiterate, which makes the presumed "heterogeneity" of readers assumed here rather problematic. And many would argue that *no term* is *essentially* philosophical, political, aesthetic or anything else, but that terms exist within historical moments that render them replete with all types of "content"; "diversity" is certainly a highly politicized term at the moment--a present moment when "diversity" does not exist as an *embodied presence* on university campuses, either among "writers" or "readers."

For this reason, bell hooks's use of multiculturalist discourse is careful to construct diversity as a presence only possible *in the future* through active "creation"; in contrast to much of the multiculturalist discourse discussed above, in hooks's discourse, "diversity" of global or community proportions does not equal *at present* that which exists in the academy: "If we fear mistakes, doing things wrongly, constantly evaluating ourselves, we *will* never *make* the academy *a culturally diverse place . . . . To create a culturally diverse academy* we must commit ourselves fully" (33, emphasis mine); "*[w]hen* we, as educators, allow our pedagogy to be radically changed by our recognition of a

multicultural world, we *can* give students the *education* they desire and deserve" (44, emphasis mine). In this discourse, "the academy" and "a multiculturally diverse place," as well as "multicultural world" and multicultural "education," do not collapse into one *present* site of cultural diversity. Nor does the discourse presume a multicultural "education" that students already have or simply can choose to have; rather, that "education," like "a culturally diverse academy," is constructed as one that students "desire and deserve" yet at present do not and cannot have.

The equation of multiculturalist discourse with the material *presence* of multiculturalism in the academy tends to overlook what Donald Macedo points out in *Literacies of Power*: that

> 'diversity' [as discourse and policy] . . . has not really increased the *presence* of subordinate cultural groups in institutional life. . . . All the policies of diversity and access will not guarantee that members of subordinate racial and cultural groups or economically disadvantaged Whites will be able to finance their university education: diversity and access without the means of access are a form of entrapment. (157-58, emphasis mine)

The very rhetoric of "choice" and "access," as well as presumed *presence*, then, adds to this "entrapment" of subordinate cultural groups. To avoid this entrapment requires a different strategy and new modes of discourse, ones that apply Rosi Braidotti's call for the political "need for the presence of real-life women in positions of discursive womanhood" or for the theoretical "recognition of

the primacy of the bodily roots of subjectivity" (90). Such a feminist strategy begins with what Braidotti terms "[t]he starting point":

> the political will to assert the specificity of the lived, female bodily experience, the refusal to disembody sexual difference into a new allegedly postmodern anti-essentialist subject, and the will to re-connect the whole debate on difference to the bodily existence and experience of women. (91)

This feminist strategy calls for discourses that examine the "bodily existence and experience of women,"[8] not only as that "existence and experience" "lives" in the texts of literature and history, but also as it "lives" in the embodied subjects who study these texts. As the white, working-class feminist Suzanne Sowinska points out,

> [a]lthough many English departments have become relatively comfortable with a critical agenda that asserts that the writers we study come from a multitude of race, class, and gender positions, the backgrounds of those of us who study those writers [including our students] is not generally given much thought at all. The actual experience of a female scholar is rarely discussed and generally her ascension through the ranks of academia is assumed to be an unproblematic acquisition of the written, verbal, and cultural skills needed to perform well in a university setting. (148-49).

In short, in the field of Literary Studies, as in other fields such as Women's studies and Cultural studies, we might do well to pay attention to any discourses that construct the academy as a site of cultural diversity and

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[8] I suggest, of course, that this type of strategy can also be applied to men, especially those of subordinate cultural groups.

universal accessibility--discourses that present the "university" as universal; even multicultural discourses dealing with curriculum and canon can assume such diversity if they subsume class under other categories like gender.[9] Discourses of "diversity" that uphold the belief that multiculturalism has already been achieved in the academy ignore the material and bodily "diversification" of the academy itself and of our education system in general.

This "diversification" depends upon a very rigid class-based "diversity" of access, a "diversity" that sociologist Daniel W. Rossides aptly describes as "disguised by the rhetoric of equality and competition" (219). He explains that such rhetoric and the ideology it perpetuates

> in education (equality of opportunity, objective-national norms, professional standards, accreditation, national programs [and, we should add, multiculturalism]) helps to conceal an unfair contest for social position. In fact, beneath the rhetoric of homogeneity and universalism, American society has created wide diversification: it has diversified its high school system so that even students who attend the same school receive different educations; it has created a highly diversified hierarchy of colleges, universities, and junior colleges; it has diversified its entire elementary and high school systems by class, as a result of residential segregation and the tradition of the neighborhood school; and it has

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[9] We also ought to be on the lookout for such discourses as they are used to structure textbooks in these fields. For example, the widely used Women's Studies textbook *Feminist Frontiers III* is structured through categories that ignore the material experiences of class and race. For instance, the "Violence Against Women" section contains articles on sexual harassment, rape, and femicide, but not on the violence of poverty and racism, forms of violence that affect large numbers of women in our society.

> taken class diversification one step further to create severe racial isolation in all parts of the nation. (219)

Rossides argues that this "educational diversification disguised by the rhetoric of equality and competition serves important latent functions" (219); "[t]he truth of the matter," he contends, "is that the American educational nonsystem does create social stability, but in a manner extremely incongruous with normative ideology: the class-based tracking system protects those with power and legitimates the failure of those without power" (219-20). Thus, this class-based "diversity" of the academy erodes the very gender and race diversity fought for by feminist and other liberal-left academics.

Examining the discourses of the academy that ignore this class and classist "diversity" as they construct a supposed multicultural diversity existing in the academy allows us to understand better not only the "paranoia" of women academics such as Kadi, who believe that "[u]niversities are designed to make working-class people feel like we don't belong" (92),[10] but also the slippage between their "paranoia" and that of right-wing critics of multiculturalism. Thus, what is needed is a careful examination of the specific *class* structure of the academy,

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[10] By "paranoia" here I do not mean to imply that Kadi has no reason for her claim; rather, as I argue in the Introduction, Kadi's "paranoia" is based upon the important material "realities" of her race, class, sexual orientation, and gender experiences in the academy.

one that resists discourses that merely subsume class under gender or race through "assert[ing] their abstract or structural equivalence" (Butler 18); such an examination follows Judith Butler's imperative to think "through the ways in which these vectors of power require and deploy each other for the purposes of their own articulation" (18). Perhaps even more importantly, it also answers Tony Bennett's call for

> hard statistical work calculated to make certain problems *visible* in a manner that will allow them to surface at the level of political debate or to impinge on policy-making processes in ways which facilitate the development of administrative programs capable of addressing them. (32, emphasis mine)

Thus, an analysis of the class structure of the academy can move us closer to the feminist project Teresa Ebert outlines, which "insists on a *materialist practice* that works for equal access *for all* to social resources and for an end to the exploitative exercise of power" (887, emphasis mine).

To begin such an examination, it is necessary to understand the class structure of our society and to explain why that structure is such a "secret" (Parenti 55). Only then can we address the danger involved with multiculturalist discourses that function to perpetuate the "secret," as well as how such discourses de-materialize the material and experiential "reality," the lived "paranoia" and pain, of the "subjects" of multiculturalism. As bell

hooks points out, "there are times," such as now, in these multiculturalist "times" of the academy,

> when so much talk or writing, so many ideas seem to stand in the way, to block the awareness that for the oppressed, the exploited, the dominated, domination is not just a subject for radical discourse, for books. It is about pain[11]--the pain of hunger, the pain of overwork, the pain of degradation and dehumanization, the pain of loneliness, the pain of loss, the pain of isolation, the pain of exile--spiritual and physical . . . (3-4)

--the pain experienced in the academy by women like Kadi, a pain that produces a very practical, comprehensible, and valid "paranoia." To comprehend this "pain" we need to understand the class structure of the academy and of our society in general, which helps to create it.

That class structure is hidden, however, by what Benjamin DeMott terms "*the myth of classlessness*" in our society (11), "the myth asserting, as [former] President George Bush [did], that class is 'for European democracies or something else--it isn't for the United States of America. We are not going to be divided by class" (9-10). We are, rather, a nation unified by the existence of one large middle class, because as Valerie Miner explains, according to this myth "[e]veryone is *potentially* middle-class" (74, emphasis mine); we are all *potentially* part of

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[11] For a detailed discussion of this "pain" as it is experienced by certain working-class families in the U.S., see Lillian B. Rubin's *Worlds of Pain: Life in the Working-class Family.*

what DeMott terms the "Imperial Middle" (41): "*[t]he American population is composed not of classes but of men and women of the middle united as strivers and self-betterers*" (41). And "[s]upposedly the bulk of the nation's wealth is spread out among the middle class"[12] (Parenti 57). In this rhetoric, those who are not part of the "Imperial Middle"--the few who are very wealthy, the few who are very poor--have *chosen* to remain outside its encompassing walls. To come inside requires only the hard work necessary to scale the walls--relinquishing the leisure of wealth, the laziness of poverty; "[s]everal hallowed concepts--independence, individualism, choice--are woven into this web of illusion and self-deception" (Smith 9), which holds the "Middle" together. It is, as David N. Smith explains, "the most widely held principle of popular sociology, th[is] belief that the majority of Americans are members of a middle class" (173).

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[12] In actuality, a small elite controls most of the wealth in this country. "As of 1992, the rich in America had a net worth of $6.14 trillion. The richest one percent controlled more than 60 percent of the national wealth--and that includes only assets declared. In contrast, over 90 percent of American families have no net wealth" (Parenti 57). Thus, given this disparity of concentration of wealth, one could argue that there is not even really a "middle" class in this country. In addition, the numbers of people who are without basic necessities is staggering: in 1987, 33.7% of American households were "shelter poor," meaning that after paying for housing they "could not buy enough food, clothing, and other necessities" (Frankel and Mishel 231). In Chapter Three I discuss the complexities of class in more detail, problematizing even further the notions of what constitutes "lower," "working," "middle," and "upper" class in our society.

Looking at the rhetoric utilized by both the Republican and Democratic parties in the most recent presidential election makes the prevalence of this belief all too apparent. As Lillian Rubin, author of *Worlds of Pain: Life in the Working-class Family*, points out, both candidates spoke "soothing words of compassion about the 'middle-class squeeze' and promise[d] help in a variety of ways" (xvi), but based upon electorial demographics, the Republicans were actually "trying to hold on to the white, *working-class* urban voters who had defected from the Democratic party" during the Bush and Reagan years, and the Democrats were seeking to "recapture" them (xvi, emphasis mine). Both parties used distorted statistics to include these voters as part of the "middle class": the Republicans by having their Congressional Budget Office decree that "any family of four with an annual income somewhere between $19,000 and $78,000 falls into the middle class" (xvii), thus including vast numbers of working-class families; and the Democrats by offering a "narrower, but equally flawed, definition" (xvii), using a significantly higher income for the family of four--$35,000--but one that still fell far below the actual median income of a U.S. family of four with two workers--$45,266"[13] (xvii). Neither candidate even

[13] See my discussion in Chapter Three of the complexities involved with defining class; I include further examination of the ways in which statistics and occupational categories are manipulated to create the myth that most Americans fall into some vast and encompassing middle class

acknowledged the existence of the working class; instead, as Rubin notes, their "rhetoric support[ed] and strengthen[ed] the myth that we are a classless society--a myth that plays an important part in the racial polarization that has become increasingly common over the past decades" (xvii).

Yet we are, of course, divided by class in this country, perhaps as rigidly as are those in "European democracies"; however, those who live in such "democracies" are not blinded as we are by "[t]he power of this icon of classlessness [which] derives from history, the media, and the national experience of public education" (DeMott 10). To explore here briefly the ways in which the media and the academy--two powerful Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) --[14] perpetuate the myth of classlessness and to examine the

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--for example, sociologists including in the "middle-class" category women office workers who make *under $6,000 per year*.

[14] As I explain in the Introduction, Althusser argues that the ISA "installed in the *dominant* position in mature capitalist social formations . . . is the *educational state apparatus*" ("Ideology" 152) because it has the most impact upon children, "drum[ming] into them," year after year, "a certain amount of 'know-how' wrapped in the ruling ideology" ("Ideology" 155); he contends that "no other ideological State apparatus has the . . . audience of the totality of the children in the capitalist social formation, eight hours a day for five or six days out of seven" ("Ideology" 156). However, I believe that what Althusser terms the communications ISA (press, radio, television, etc.) has perhaps as much of an impact upon children, especially since most of them watch television as many hours a week as they attend school. That the media is a for-profit industry while the academy is supposedly not is irrelevant in terms of their impact upon constructions of subjectivity. As Althusser notes, it does not matter whether the institutions "are 'public' or 'private.' What matters is how they

impact this myth has upon subordinate cultural groups, especially poor and working-class women, and their access to the academy,[15] will not only explain the slippage between right-wing/liberal-left discourses of multiculturalism and the "paranoia" of women academics like Kadi; it will also begin to materialize the important race, class, and gender experiences of such women, thus rendering visible the pain of those experiences; it will also lead us to a place beyond that pain, a place of strength and hope, where multiculturalist *presence* in the academy might begin to be formulated.

The "place of strength and hope" that I envision is certainly not the mythological "Imperial Middle" space created by the media--a space allowing only for the myth of classlessness and an unattainable American Dream. Consider, for example, a recent Ford car commercial. It constructs for us a mythical planet (strikingly like Earth) where anyone can slam dunk: small children, little old ladies--they all fly through the air and drop the basketball in the hoop. And on this planet everyone--EVERYONE--is given the keys to a brand new Ford car just for being born. (The baby pictured is white.) And best of all, on this planet

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function. Private institutions can perfectly well 'function' as Ideological State Apparatuses" ("Ideology" 144).

[15] In Chapter Three, I explore the role played by historical discourses in the creation of the myth.

everyone--EVERYONE--can buy anything he wants for just a dollar. (The baby and the adult are male.) We see Mr. "Everyone"--represented by a young, white (WASP) male--driving his Ford (his birthright) up a long driveway towards a magnificent mansion. Rows and rows of servants holding trays of sumptuous dishes line the driveway in front of the house. Presumably "Everyone" has bought all this with just a dollar. The message of the commercial is not so much that purchasing a Ford car will lead to ease and luxury in our lives; rather, it is that Ford understands every American's fantasy to lead such a life of ease--to be wealthy--yet knows that we are all really middle class. Everyone is of this class; everyone works hard and dreams of leisure; everyone deserves and can afford a Ford car. "Everyone," of course, does not include the working class, those rows of servants standing before the mansion. "We" are not meant to identify with "them"; "we" are not meant to ask, "If everything costs 'a dollar,' if anything can be purchased for *just* 'a dollar,' then why are they servants?" "We" are not meant to speculate, "Perhaps not everyone *has* a dollar. Perhaps not everyone is part of the all-encompassing middle class."

And consider a widely popular television show--"Married with Children." The local television station promo declares, "This is the typical *middle-class* family." Nuclear: one dad who works, one mom who doesn't, two

children--one boy, one girl--a faithful dog, one house, one garage, a couple of cars. The father goes to work every day; the mother goes shopping on hubbie's credit cards. It all seems so typically "middle class."[16] And yet there's a catch: Al is a shoe salesman--a *shoe salesman*. No family could be middle-class on such an income. There would be no house, no cars, no wife who doesn't have to work, no credit cards, perhaps no dog (who could afford the food? the vet bills?)--for that matter, who could afford to feed the children? It is a joke that there is never any food in the house (Peg hates to cook), yet if anyone *thinks* about it, on Al's salary there would be no food. But "we" are not expected to "think about it"--at least not to think about class--and if "we" happen to be shoe salesmen, we are expected to believe that if we cannot purchase all that Al does with such an income, then we have only ourselves to blame.[17] After all, in the media-generated "Imperial Middle" world of the United States of America, even a prostitute--someone from the very bottom of the social scale--can be quickly and easily upwardly mobile if she is

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[16] I mean mythically "middle class." In actuality such a nuclear family is not representative of the middle class, let alone the working or lower classes. Even most upper middle-class families that are "nuclear" require two incomes to maintain their class status.

[17] In Chapter Three I connect this blaming of the victim in our society with constructions of class dating back to the Victorian Period--constructions of the 'respectables' and 'roughs,' which interpret as moral aspects of subjectivity that are materially based.

simply a "Pretty Woman." Anyone, despite his or her socio-economic status, can attain the American Dream, can ascend into the Imperial Middle, for, as a recent AT&T commercial proclaims, "It's all within your reach."

And even when the message is counter-hegemonic[18]--even when it clearly states that the Imperial Middle is not within reach--politicians and the media can quickly and effectively suppress that message. Take the example of Bruce Springsteen, whose songs resist the dominant construction of class in our culture by rendering class oppression visible. As James H. Kavanagh explains, the columnist George Will appropriated Springsteen,

> lauding [him] as a shining example of the American dream--of how hard work, ambition, and the unfettered ability to accumulate wealth can give hope, if not ensure success, to working-class Americans. This version of Springsteen was then worked into a Reagan speech in Springsteen's home state of New Jersey, . . . [depicting him] as a Reaganite kind of guy (318).

Of course, Springsteen's lyrics make clear that he is *not* "a Reaganite kind of guy." I stitch together a few of those lyrics to create a Springsteen "essay." I've chosen lyrics easily recognizable to Springsteen fans, and perhaps to most radio listeners, as each comes from a title track song that

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[18] I am employing here Antonio Gramsci's concept of "hegemony," which Roger Simon explains as "the practices of a capitalist class or its representatives [Althusser's ISAs, for example], both in gaining state power, and in maintaining that power once it has been achieved" (22). "Counter-hegemonic" messages oppose such power and the methods through which it is enforced.

received extensive air play. Woven with material from *Born to Run*, *The River*, and *Born in the U.S.A.*, the "essay" tells the story of a working-class man's life, and it clarifies Springsteen's views on this country's class structure:

> It's a death-trap, it's a suicide-rap, we gotta get out while we're young, 'cause tramps like us, baby, we were born to run. . . . Then I got Mary pregnant, and man, that was all she wrote. And for my nineteenth birthday I got a union card and a wedding coat. . . . I got a job workin' construction for the Johnstown company, but lately there ain't been much work on account of the economy, and all those things that seemed so important, well, mister, they vanished right into the air. Now I just act like I don't remember, and Mary acts like she don't care. . . . Now those memories come back to haunt me, they haunt me like a curse. Is a dream a lie if it don't come true, or is it something worse? . . . Now Main Street's shop front windows are vacant stores. Seems like there ain't no body wants to come down here no more; they're closin' down the textile mill across the railroad tracks. The foreman says these jobs are goin', boys, and they ain't comin' back to your home town. . . . Son, take a good look around, this is your home town . . . . Born down in a dead man's town, the first kick I took was when I hit the ground. You end up like a dog that's been beat too much, till you spend half your life tryin' to cover it up. Born in the U.S.A. Born in the U.S.A. Born in the U.S.A. I was born in the U.S.A. . . . Down in the shadow of the penitentiary, I feel the gas fires of the refinery. I'm ten years burnin' down the road, nowhere to run, ain't got nowhere to go. Born in the U.S.A. I was born in the U.S.A.

Given these lyrics--their clear reference to the working class and the miserable conditions they face in this country--one would think that Springsteen's audience would respond with outrage at his appropriation by the Republican party, but instead, they actually believed the media depictions of Springsteen as a devoted Reaganite whose faith

in the American dream could never be shaken. As Kavanagh explains, Springsteen himself finally had to "remind his audiences that the words of his songs (like "My Hometown") hardly proclaim the durability of the American dream"; he then "donate[d] concert proceeds to union welfare funds" and spoke "to workers rallying against plant closures, telling them: 'What goes unmeasured is the price that unemployment inflicts on people's families, their marriages, on the single mothers out there trying to raise their kids on their own'" (319). Why did his audience even believe the media's depiction in the first place? How can such distorted conceptions of class gain cultural acceptance?

If we turn to Althusser, we find that the answer lies in ideology and the way in which the dominant ideology becomes "interpellated" as the norm[19]--as what members of a culture unquestioningly accept as truth. The construction of Springsteen's subjectivity as a patriot believing in everyone's access to the Imperial Middle derives, then, from this process of "normalization," through which everyone in our culture is forced into a particular class norm, a "mythical norm . . . against which Others are defined and assigned privilege and limitations" (Ellsworth 114). The process also involves what Audre Lorde calls an "[i]nstitutionalized rejection of difference" (115). Lorde

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[19] See the Introduction for a more extensive discussion of interpellation.

argues that in a "profit economy" such as ours, which must have "outsiders as surplus people"--"outsiders" who do not fit into the "mythical norm"--all members, both "insiders" and "outsiders," have been "programmed" to respond to difference in three ways: "ignore it, and if that is not possible, copy it if we think it is dominant, or destroy it if we think it is subordinate" (115). Springsteen's "difference"--his presentation of the material "realities" of working-class experience--was ignored, if not destroyed, through that "difference" being copied or appropriated within a system set up to reject any ideology not supportive of the dominant class ideology.

Such a system requires, then, a mythical norm such as "classlessness," for it is based upon what Luce Irigaray terms an "economy of the Same." That "Sameness" against which all difference is judged is constructed through "master discourses"--dominant discourses that portray certain subject positions as valid, relevant, important, and "others" as insignificant (to be ignored), as partially significant ("worthy," and thus to be copied, appropriated, assimilated to the norm), or as invalid, dangerous, criminal (to be destroyed). Applying Hélène Cixous and Cathérine Clément's theory on the discourse of mastery, we could say that the discourse of "classlessness" is a sort of cultural "law," which is presented as an "'open door' in precisely such a way that you never go to the other side of the door

. . . . So you never will know that there is no law"; "a sort of complex ideological secretion produced by an infinite quantity of doorkeepers" (138) veils the mythical constructedness of this "law." Thus, the material experiences of a shoe salesman, or a prostitute, or a working-class "hero" like Springsteen can be ignored, copied, destroyed--secreted across television screens and bought by American consumers as the "law"--a class(less) cultural "reality." Similarly, the material, class structure of the academy can be ignored, copied, destroyed by "ideological secretions" in the form of various discourses--whether right-wing or liberal--which disconnect the academy from social, historical, and political forces.

For example, consider the term "public" or "state university" versus "private university"; the former term implies that such a university is in the control of the people, or at the very least the state government, presumably meaning representatives of "the people." However, those who actually run these "state" institutions are not always elected government officials[20], rather they

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[20] Even when government officials have control over state institutions, that control is usually divorced from the best interests of "the people," especially those in the academy most affected by the regulations imposed by government officials--the staff, faculty, students, and administrators. The intrusion by state legislators into the management of state universities and colleges is becoming more common. Such intrusion often imposes standards upon the academy that devalue the quality of education offered through treating the academy as a business, not a government-run social institution. For example, in the

are "boards of trustees drawn almost entirely from the business community, including real-estate magnates, bankers, and directors and chief executive officers of leading corporations" (Parenti 89). Citing three major studies, David Smith provides substantial evidence that those who control the state universities are "tightly integrated in the military-industrial complex web of modern capitalism" (37). And Lawrence C. Soley's 1995 study, *Leasing the Ivory Tower: the Corporate Takeover of Academia*, meticulously documents the growing "corporate takeover" of the academy. This "takeover" has serious implications for "multiculturalism" and "diversity" in the academy[21]; inclusion of class issues and class analysis of the academy is more important than ever, if "multiculturalism" is not to

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state of Florida, legislators have deemed 120 credit hours as sufficient to constitute a quality undergraduate Liberal Arts and Sciences education. These legislators are more interested in having students complete that "education" in four years or less, thus enabling more student-consumers to purchase the commodity offered by the university--an "education"--than in having students actually acquire a quality education.

[21] And for women students it has special relevance. The corporate takeover of universities and colleges has "increased funding for high-tech-related education programs"--programs such as engineering and science, in which women students typically do not enroll--and this funding "has meant reduced funding and resources for liberal arts programs" (Feagin and Feagin, 194), where women are most prevalent. And since women faculty and administrators are also less common in the corporate-sanctioned high-tech fields, the power distribution will become increasingly more imbalanced in terms of gender, especially if the higher ranking positions in universities--deanships, for example--become available more often to those whose fields coincide with corporate approval.

become merely the tool of capitalist elites who want to find more effective methods of controlling the global economy. Indeed, not only the current but the historical ties of capitalism to the academy need to be examined. That "Cornell, Johns Hopkins, Clark, Duke, Vanderbilt, Tulane, and Stanford . . no longer [signify] ruthless business tycoons but prestigious universities . . . [or that] Carnegie is remembered not for the workers he starved but for his Hall, his institute, and his Endowment" (Parenti 95) are dangerous instances of the "normalization" process the academy has undergone in terms of effacing class experience; this process, with its "ideological secretions," requires the serious attention of those who claim to support "multiculturalism" in the academy.

It is important to view the academy, then, as a cultural text grounded in history, one that is "intertextual" with the "multicultural" texts that those of us in fields such as Literary Criticism, Cultural Studies and Women's Studies have been bringing into the canon. Reading the academy in this way can allow us to look more closely at the embodied subjects who do and do not have access to it. A belief that the academy is accessible to poor and working-class people derives, in part, from the history of the academy. Only very recently, some fifty years ago, did these classes even gain any access at all (and for people of color it wasn't until much more recently,

in the 1970s[22]). "Until the 1940s, higher education was a very elite operation, limited for the most part to children of capitalists, managers, and professionals" (Feagin and Feagin 191); after World War II, however, thousands of predominantly white males from poor and working-class backgrounds were able to attend college due to the G.I. Bill (Feagin and Feagin 191). In the 1960s and 1970s, "hundreds of community and other two-year colleges [were] established in most states" (Feagin and Feagin 191), thus allowing even more poor and working-class people to attend. In 1960, close to three million students attended college-level institutions (Smith 226); by 1970 the number had risen to more than eight million, "representing fully 50 percent of the 18-21-year-old age group in America" (Smith 226). Smith, analyzing the class backgrounds of college students, stated in 1974, "Formerly, students were the peaches-and-cream white Protestant children of the ruling and middle classes, preparing for the assumption of leadership roles in

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[22] It is extremely important to note, however, that people of color have experienced a very class-stratified access to the academy, an access which has become even more class-stratified in recent years. Affirmative action based on race rarely takes socio-economic income into account, and thus students of color who attend universities come predominantly from the middle and upper classes. In fact, because certain groups such as African-Americans experience such extreme poverty as a group, there is a "shortage" of "African-American students who are ready for top-tier universities. In 1993, out of approximately 400,000 black high-school seniors nationwide, only 1,644 got combined scores of 1200 or better on the SATs, and only 8, 256 scored between 1000 and 1200" (Morganthau 30-31).

society" (228); "at present about 20 percent of the children of the upper working class enroll, which means that in absolute numbers there are in college today more youth from the working class than from the upper and upper-middle class" (230).

The gains cited by Smith in terms of access to the academy for working-class people have been misrepresented and overestimated, however. While it is true that "more youth from the working class than from the upper and upper-middle class" attended college in the early 1970s, the *types* of colleges these youths attended differed greatly depending upon race, as did the material benefits resulting from the degrees attained at these colleges. Because upper and upper-middle class white students were more likely to attend the elite, private four-year institutions and the poor and working-class minority students to attend two-year community and technical colleges (Mingle 13), the poor and working-class minority students achieved only slight if any upward class mobility.[23] And certain racial groups, especially blacks and hispanics, were highly unrepresented during this

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[23] As Monte Piliawsky notes, "social class tracking continues even within the community college. Terminal vocational training programs . . . are filled by those from low income backgrounds. In the end, community college students are placed in occupations very similar to those of their parents" (145).

time, as they still are in the 1990s.[24] The college participation rates of Hispanic and Black college-aged youth actually began declining in the mid-1970s and have been on the decline ever since (Mingle ix).

Another factor ignored is the attrition rate among poor and working-class students, especially students of color.[25] Participation does not necessarily equal success, either in terms of graduating from college or receiving a higher paying job, even if one does graduate. During the 1970s, when more poor and working-class people entered college, the overall wages of college graduates *fell* by 9.6% (Frankel and

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[24] That representation in four-year versus two-year institutions has been steadily declining since the early 1970s. For example, "the black undergraduate enrollment at the University of California at Berkeley dropped by half from over 1400 in 1972 to 733 by February of 1977" (Piliawsky 148). Representation is also class-biased. At Harvard, for example, "by the end of the 1970s, working-class blacks dropped from 40 to 25 percent of the total black incoming class, the decline apparently continuing into the 1980s" (Hinds et al. 305). Harvard openly admits that they seek "black students who come from middle-class backgrounds and primarily white high schools"; it is, they claim, "'right for Harvard and better for the students'" (Hinds et al. 305).

[25] Statistics from the early 1980s demonstrate that a greater percentage of poor and working-class African-Americans than of poor and working-class whites were admitted to four-year institutions (16.6% and 13.3% of poor blacks were admitted into public and private institutions respectively, versus 11.4% and 7.9% of poor whites); however, of those who entered these institutions, a much higher percentage of the poor white students actually graduated--43.5%--versus only 28.1% of the poor blacks. Thus, while certain lower-class people of color might gain more initial access than lower-class whites, the numbers of poor students overall who graduate even out in terms of race because so many more students of color drop out (Hauptman and Smith).

Mishel 93). What is important about this phenomenon is not that the entrance of more poor and working-class people into the academy created the decline in wages--other factors of course were involved--but that poor and working-class students, like their middle- and upper-class counterparts, did *not* necessarily benefit from increased wages as a result of their degrees. One study on class mobility done in the 1970s demonstrates the *lack* of upward mobility at that time: "fewer than one in five men [sic] surpass[ed] the economic status of their fathers" (Mantsios 83).

And in terms of graduate education, as the 1970s wore on, fewer and fewer students from the poor and working class (and the lower middle class) were likely to attend because

> [f]unding for federal programs ha[d] been reduced at the same time that tuition ha[d] increased dramatically. . . . Between 1970 and 1981 federal funds for fellowships, scholarships, and traineeships declined by more than half, and the number of federal stipends for graduate study declined from nearly 80,000 to 40,000. (Meléndez 111)

Perhaps most telling in terms of the supposed "gains" of poor and working-class people, however, is the widely cited study of William H. Sewell published in 1971: his research

> showed a positive correlation between class and overall educational achievement. In comparing the top 25 percent of his sample to the bottom 25 percent, he found that students from upper-class families were: twice as likely to obtain training beyond high school, four times as likely to go to college, six times as likely to graduate from college, and nine times as likely to attain a postgraduate degree. Sewell concluded, 'Socio-economic background . . . operates independently

> of academic ability at every stage in the process of educational attainment.' (Mantsios 83)

As Bengt Furåker notes, "[i]n advanced capitalist nations, formal education has expanded widely during the twentieth century. The average level of schooling has increased for *all* classes," and thus it may appear that poor and working-class people's "gains" are fairly great; however, the gaps between the classes are even "*more* persistent" because "educational success" is directly tied "to social background" (85, emphasis mine), as Sewell's and numerous other researchers' studies demonstrate (85).

In addition, these so-called "gains" of poor and working-class people's access to higher education have been swiftly eroding during the 1980s and 1990s primarily due to the shift in our economy--the rich have been getting richer, the poor poorer, and many of the middle and lower middle-class have moved downwards to the working-class[26]. In fact, statistics demonstrate that at least for poor and working-class whites, there was greater class equality in 1967 than in 1989 because income distribution has become increasing more unequal in this country since the late 1960s; in fact, "inequality in 1989 exceeded the level in 1947" (Frankel and Mishel 20-21). And in the late 1980s, at a time when fewer poor and working-class people could afford college (and

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[26] See my discussion in Chapter Three of the shifting of classes in the country in the last fifteen years and how these shifts have disproportionately affected the poor, especially women and people of color.

fewer middle-class people for that matter)[27], class position was more directly related to one's level of education than it had been in the 1970s or 1960s: "the wage gap between college and high school graduates grew strongly from 1963 to 1971 [before wide-spread community college education], up 14.2 percentage points, [then] fell 18.3 percentage points from 1971 to 1979 [when college was more "accessible" to the working class and poor], and then rose by 18.7 percentage points between 1979 and 1987 [when "access" lessened for poor and working-class people]" (Frankel and Mishel 93). Because of the wage stagnation and erosion of wages for non-college graduates, "the vast majority of workers have not improved their wage position in the 1980s"; these "workers" come from the poor and working classes (Frankel and Mishel 95). While 50% of 18-21 year olds may have been in college in 1970 (Smith 226), in 1987 "only 25.5% of the workforce

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[27] Fees for private colleges and universities, which typically "provide their graduates with better employment opportunities and connections than public colleges," rose dramatically during the 1980s, thus "rais[in] new barriers for low- and middle-income families" (Frankel and Mishel, 249). The cost per year at the average private four-year institution rose from $9,060 in 1978-79 to $13.840 in 1987-88; this cost rose from 2.1 times that of a four-year public institution in 1972-73, to 2.4 times in 1978-9, to 2.8 times in 1987-88. In addition, the average federal financial aid award in 1980-81, not including student loans, covered 33.5% of the average cost of attendance at a private university, whereas in 1988-89, it amounted to only 20.9%. In 1980-81, the average award paid a full 81.2% of the cost of a year at a public university, whereas in 1988-89 it paid only 60.6% (Frankel and Mishel 249-50).

aged 25-64 had completed [four years of] college" (Frankel and Mishel 95).

These statistics are significant because they demonstrate that higher education is the key to upward mobility, to higher wages[28]: the only group that experienced any significant growth in wages--up 8% from 1979 to 1987 (Frankel and Mishel 93)--are four-year college graduates, who come from mostly middle- and upper-class backgrounds to begin with; the group experiencing falling wages since 1979 (54.7% of the workforce) are those with only a high school diploma or less, the vast majority of whom come from poor and working-class backgrounds; those who have 1 to 3 years of college (most poor or working-class people who manage to make it to college fall into this category)--21.9% of the workforce--experienced only a very minimal 1.5% growth in wages from 1979 to 1987. Thus, most of the poor and working-class people who *did* complete some college experienced very little change in their class position.

What tends to be concealed, then, by discourses of "access" to higher education and of "diversity," is the tracking system of education in this country, a system that

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[28] Wages are not, of course, the sole determinant of class. Other factors such as education (of course), status and cultural knowledge are crucial components. Pierre Bourdieu distinguishes among various types of "capital": economic, political, social, cultural, educational, symbolic, linguistic, scientific. In Chapter Three I examine these various "capitals" and discuss how they are useful in formulating a complex class continuum.

keeps class position relatively fixed. Multicultural discourse that posits "access" ignores this system altogether: "the United States has created a large and diverse system of colleges and universities with near universal access to students of all abilities, ages, and interests, where 'any student can study any subject'" (Trow 281). As Virginia Woolf would say, let's look at the facts: enrollment in college is linked more to "family income and parents' education" (Mingle 18-19) than even to factors such as race (although class oppression *is* intricately linked to race oppression, and racism causes many students to drop out of college once admitted). Two-thirds of students whose parents have less than a high school education never even enroll in college, and that percentage drops to 29% for those whose parents have some college education, and finally to 9% for those whose parents have Ph.D.s or M.D.s (Mingle 19). And in terms of the poorest students, those whose annual family income is less than $7,000, "[n]ine out of 10 [of them] . . . either never [even] entered college or failed to persist full-time" if they did (Mingle 19).

If we examine the "diversity" of this "system of colleges and universities with near universal access," we find four major types of institutions: community colleges, four-year state colleges, state universities, and elite universities and colleges. As one moves from community colleges on up to elite universities, the emphasis on rules,

scheduled coursework, and "job training" decreases, while the emphasis on independence training and "careers" increases, as does the percentage of students who are white (Feagin and Feagin 191). Students in community colleges "come disproportionately from blue-collar, lower-income, and minority families. They tend to be tracked through vocational lines in high schools and community colleges into blue-collar and lower-level white collar jobs"; students in four-year state colleges and state universities "come disproportionately from middle-income families and tend to move into middle-level and upper-level white-collar jobs (sales, professional, technical)"; the "students in the elite colleges and universities"--mostly from elite families--"go on to occupy the higher capitalist, managerial, and professional positions in society" (Feagin and Feagin 191-92). The "universal access" offered by our higher education system translates into "universal access" to one's original class position.

What other than the greater expense of four-year institutions keeps poor and working-class students from attending these institutions which, if they successfully graduate from them, can lead to upward mobility? Aren't poor and working-class students transferring to these institutions after graduating from community college? The answer is no: "only 9% of those first entering community college in 1980 were college seniors four years later"

(Mingle 21); and studies that allow several additional years' time for these students to transfer find that less than one-fifth ever even make it to a four-year institution[29] (Mingle 21). While community colleges do offer students important skills and knowledge, these do not translate into upward mobility; thus, "many community colleges have become educational 'ghettos' for students from poor and blue-collar white families, for blacks, Puerto Ricans, other Hispanics, and older working-class women" (Feagin and Feagin 192). In addition, the majority of four-year institutions use multiple choice tests such as the SAT and GRE to screen students into or out of their programs; these "tests and their administration [have been proven to be] biased against students from minority and blue-collar backgrounds" (Feagin and Feagin 192). These institutions also use high school grade point averages to select their

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[29] Those who do attend and graduate from four-year institutions can then have difficulty gaining acceptance to more elite graduate programs; a class stigma is attached to community college attendance. My brother, for example, attended Harrisburg Area Community College (H.A.C.C.), graduated with an A.A. degree, received a scholarship to Temple University, graduated with a B.S. in journalism, then applied for a graduate fellowship at Harvard. He made it all the way to being one of two candidates for the fellowship, but during his interview he was asked, "What is H.A.C.C.?" When he explained, the interviewer responded, "A *community* college! How did you even make it this far for an interview? I'm not giving a fellowship to someone who went to *community* college," and tossed my brother's application materials into the trash. My brother went on to be runner-up for the Pulitzer Prize in Investigative Reporting, despite his working-class background and Harvard's obvious classism.

students, and "African Americans, Hispanics and [other] poor students tend to receive lower high school GPAs" (Astin 44). As Alexander Astin points out,

> [c]learly, the continuing reliance on such measures by college and university admission offices will make it very difficult for any educationally disadvantaged or underrepresented group to attain equal or proportionate access to higher education opportunities. (44)

Astin thus exposes the multiculturalist rhetoric of "equal access" as being merely a cover-up for what is, in reality, a very unfair, class-, race-, and age-biased system. He explains that our country does not really have a "true tracking system" (46), one that allows for "access" for below average scoring students. In such a system, "the best-prepared students would be admitted *only* to the top track, the middle students only to the middle track, and the weakest students only to the bottom track" (46). Students of all preparedness levels would then have a chance to gain more preparation for higher level tracks and move on. However, in our current system, "the best prepared students are allowed to enter *any* public institution, while middle-scoring students are allowed to enter all except the most selective universities" (46); thus, the least prepared students--predominantly poor, working-class, and students of color--are crowded out by the better prepared students. They are also limited to attending a single choice of institutional type--the community college. Affirmative action usually takes only race, not class or age, into

account, and also promotes the best prepared students of those of color (poor and working-class whites have no access via this route); thus, poor and working-class students of color, who tend to be less prepared, are not the ones who usually benefit from affirmative action.[30]

These disadvantaged students are negatively affected by the measures used to screen college applicants long before they reach college age. As Astin explains, students in secondary schools

> who perform below the 'norm' are receiving powerful negative messages about their performance and capabilities. At best, they are being told that they are not working hard enough; at worst, they are being told that they lack the capacity to succeed in academic work. . . . [Thus,] many [of these] students opt out of education altogether, long before they reach an age where they might consider applying for college. (45)

Because poor and working-class students are "tracked" throughout their elementary and secondary educations into the lower-level, vocationally oriented courses; because their education is substandard from day one; because they are seldom encouraged even to consider college as a

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[30] The fact that poor and working-class students of color tend not to benefit from affirmative action relates to what Joe L. Kincheloe, speaking of blacks in particular, terms an "insidious" "institutionalized racism." He argues that racism has "evolved" in the last fifty years to a racism that "takes the form of public policies and socio-economic arrangements which deny blacks access to legal, medical, or *educational* facilities" (255, emphasis mine). For further discussion of how classism relates to racism in terms of access to education, see Robert E. England et al.'s *Race, Class, and Education: The Politics of Second-Generation Discrimination.*

possibility; because they deal with sexism and racism and other oppressions that magnify and multiply their class oppression (and vice versa)--for all of these reasons many *do* "opt out of education altogether"; or rather, I would say that they themselves have been "opted out," for little "opt(ion)" or "choice" is involved given the material circumstances these students face.

Clairece Booher Feagin and Joe R. Feagin prefer to use the term "pushout" versus "dropout" to emphasize the lack of choice involved. Replacing the standard term shifts the rhetoric away from a discourse of morality and blame, instead emphasizing the material, *class* basis of why students leave school before graduating. As they note, these "[s]tudents from poor families, regardless of race or ethnic group, are three to four times as likely" to be "pushed out" as are those from more affluent families (201). They argue that "[f]or many who are poor, school is an irrelevant, bureaucratized environment that is usually not very supportive of personal growth and development"; it is, they contend, also usually the case that poor families "face the difficult choice of taking the child out of school to help with younger children or to put them to work to help support the family" (201-2). They also cite malnourishment, inadequate clothing and school supplies, less personalized attention, teachers' expectations of these students' low achievement, and "a curriculum that has little relevance to

their real world" as ways in which these students "are pushed out of the schools" (202). Thus, their use of a different discourse here serves to highlight the material class oppression of these students.

Indeed, perhaps what keeps poor and working-class people out of institutions of higher learning most--or "pushes" them out if they do manage to get in in the first place--is "just" the daily grind of poverty and work, the daily material experiences of "pain" that bell hooks discusses, especially those stemming from the violence of poverty:

> One study found that a number of low-income people who return to school for training under public programs drop out before completion, even though they are performing well academically. One woman left because her 13-year-old son was beaten to death by an older boy and she could no longer apply herself; another had to go into hiding when her ex-husband threatened her with a butcher knife; another could no longer pay her babysitter when child-care checks stopped coming; and another found herself homeless after her father ran off with the rent money.[31] (Parenti 112)

And when such "pain" is not impacting upon the lives of students, as Feagin and Feagin point out, the irrelevance to their lives of the type of learning they receive can be pain enough. My mother told me recently that the remedial schooling program she attended before entering community college included instruction by a retired, middle-class, white high school English teacher. She taught my mother--a

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[31] These examples highlight the materiality of both gender and class oppression.

white, disabled woman on welfare with a dying husband at home--along with the other women in the course--four single, black women on welfare who, like my mother, had several children--irrelevant vocabulary words such as "trousseau," which angered and alienated the women in the class. When the black women finally quit, walking out complaining that they were "tired of the bullshit," the teacher turned to my mother and asked, "What did I do wrong?" to which my mother replied, "What in God's name do marriage dowries have to do with those women's *lives*? Don't you get it?" She obviously did not.

This instructor did not understand what many feminist educators emphasize: "that most women (and perhaps men, too) learn best through a pedagogy that emphasizes connectedness between learner and educator, among learners, and between learners and experience" (Wright 29). They also learn best when their "experience" does not include class oppression. Perhaps what is most disturbing about the multiculturalist rhetoric widely disseminated in the academy is the way in which it covers up the class oppression of poor and working-class people who *have* managed to gain "access" to the academy. Materializing their oppression is extremely important because part of the myth of classlessness and the "normalization" process involved with it includes treating poor and working-class students as if they are suddenly,

miraculously middle-class simply because they are attending college.

Working-Class Women in the Academy: Laborers in the Knowledge Factory begins this important re-materializing process. The authors in this anthology contextualize their personal experience of class oppression within a theoretical/political examination of the academy; as Lillian Robinson notes, "some (in fact I think most), women from working-class backgrounds talk about the academic world as an alien place" (Ellis 43). They detail the enormous debts they have accrued in college (Kadi says her "college loans are as big as many home mortgages, and so are the monthly payments"[32] (65), as well as what it was like to go through undergraduate and graduate school with "no savings, no decent car, furniture or clothes" (Kadi 66); they explain how the different values they encountered, the "different set of 'manners,'" the "pretentious small talk" required of them constituted "an exhausting experience" (Kadi 67), as

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[32] It is important to note that due to our downsliding economy, many middle-class graduate students are now having to acquire huge debts; of course, the impact is just that much greater on poor and working-class students. Many middle-class students are able to go through their undergraduate years without accumulating much debt, whereas less class-privileged students usually have a $10,000-$20,000 "head-start." In addition, many middle-class students, at least during their undergraduate years, are covered under their parents' health insurance policies, whereas poor and working-class students are not. These potential medical costs make student-loan debts even higher.

did taking on extra jobs to pay for school;[33] they describe the consequences of not having "the launch pad of a middle-class upbringing" (Annas 167): no money for books or tuition, poor housing, poor health, no ability to pay for decent childcare--in short, with the exception of particular educational expenses, all of the same problems that poor and working-class people face. They discuss the inequalities that exist at the faculty level and the way in which working-class women academicians tend to be tracked into part-time adjunct positions at community colleges.

They also discuss how "acknowledging the claims of the working class as marginalized and disadvantaged would throw wrenches into the machinery of academia's programs of affirmative action" (O'Dair 244), posing questions such as,

> Who is the more disadvantaged? Or the more historically disadvantaged? The son of, say, a black lawyer who practices in Gadsden, Alabama; or the son of a white mechanic who works somewhere in Southern Pennsylvania; or the daughter of a Japanese grocer who owns a small market in Fresno, California; or the daughter of a single white woman who works as a data entry clerk in Boulder Colorado? (O'Dair 244)

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[33] It's interesting to note that these extra jobs are not usually taken into account on scholarship applications; in fact, these applications often require that students show evidence of "community service"--ironically, such service could mean helping out the "underprivileged" poor and working classes through volunteer work. Students from these classes, however, do not have the luxury of being able to work without pay: they need such money to survive as well as to pay for college. Thus, they are effectively shut out from receiving many scholarships, while their middle- and upper-class competitors are deemed more "worthy" because they volunteer five or ten hours per week, when a working-class student might work forty hours.

Such questions probably upset many in the academy who uphold multiculturalism and the current policies of affirmative action, yet who ignore the class aspects of these programs. Affirmative action based solely on race becomes especially problematic when the people *most* in need of such action--the poor and working-class people of color--benefit from it the least. When upper middle-class and upper-class students of color receive affirmative action over far less class-privileged people, the cultural "diversity" of the academy becomes a "diversity" of an elite kind.

Perhaps some academics would also be upset by the following scenario: a white female undergraduate from a poverty background, who has transferred from a community college to a major state university in Florida, does not receive her financial aid money until six weeks into her first semester there. She has no family members from whom she can borrow money. The university has small emergency short term loans of $400.00, but after one month of paying for rent, utilities, and books (the university book store has no program set up to "loan" her the books until her aid comes in), she has no more money for food. She eats what the Hare Krishnas provide for free every day in the center of campus, but one meal a day is not enough. She finally goes down to the blood plasma center to sell her plasma, make thirty dollars, and buy food, but the nurse there tells her she is "underweight" and not a suitable donor. "But I

have no money for food. I promise if you buy my plasma I'll use the money to eat, then I'll gain weight," she pleads, but is turned away. She could sell her body in a different way, but she chooses not to. She drops down to 83 pounds before her aid money comes.

I was that undergraduate, and when I speak of the "hardest part" of my undergraduate or graduate education, I do not mention exams, or papers, or anything academic; I speak, rather, of the bodily, material experiences of poverty. I have taught students who also went without food, without medicine they needed, without proper heating in the winter, without books; who were raped in the unsafe apartments where they lived. So when I hear "diversity" and "multiculturalism" yet see the long lines of students in the financial aid office, mostly black and Hispanic, but also many whites, waiting week after week for their money, I wonder how many drop out, or commit suicide, or prostitute themselves to stay in school. When I learn of new policies proposed at my university, policies such as requiring financial aid recipients to take fifteen versus twelve credit hours per term to receive aid (as if these students are not *already* overburdened by the additional hours they put in working to support themselves), when I learn that lower tuition might now be offered to those students--those *class privileged* students--who complete their Bachelor's degrees in four years, versus the five or more years it

takes most poor and working-class students (and even a number of middle-class students, especially those who are above the traditional age and/or have children), I have to wonder how devoted to "diversity" and "multiculturalism" my university really is. When I see "academic progress" guidelines in my department which mean that poor and working-class students who become ill must drop out, or rather, be "pushed out,"[34] perhaps losing forever their chance of completing graduate school (while middle- and upper-class students have more resources with which to take a "leave of absence"--parental support,[35] selling their $10,000 to $40,000 car to buy a $600 "working-class" car[36],

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[34] These students must remain enrolled in graduate courses to continue receiving financial aid; an ill student can hardly work a minimum-wage job full-time (or more) to support himself or herself during a leave of absence, and, if he or she were to do so, that student's health would probably decline to such a point that re-entering graduate school would be impossible.

[35] The flattened wage scale in this country has made such support more difficult for middle-class people than it was in the past. However, such people undoubtedly have far greater resources to liquidate than poor or working-class families in the event of a health crisis that might result in a graduate student losing his or her chances at a career. Liquidation of such resources--a car, a house, etc.--could of course bring that family down to a lower socio-economic level, but at least one family member would complete graduate school and have a greater chance at acquiring a middle-class income to re-purchase the car, house, etc. in the future. For already poor or working-class families, such chances are not possible in these "academic progress" situations.

[36] I drive a 1979 Toyota worth perhaps $300, and I will have to continue to drive it, even after I receive a Ph.D., because even with a $30,000 annual income, after paying for taxes, accumulated medical debts, credit card debts, and

moving to cheaper housing, etc.), I have to wonder what the race, class, gender" triad means--a course on African American women writers? (When I proposed teaching a course entitled, "Writing About Race, Class, and Gender," I was told, "We already have a course like that--"Writing About Minority Women.") When I hear rhetoric like "graduate student *support*" to refer to teaching assistantships, rhetoric that covers up the fact that many graduate students, especially in English departments, are not "supported" by anything--they *work* long hours as "Teaching Assistants" (another rhetorical cover-up; many of us "assist" no one, but do all the work ourselves and for very meager wages)--well, when I hear such rhetoric, I cannot help but be suspicious. Given these material "realities," I am, like Kadi, "paranoid."

But fortunately the academy, despite its flaws, does allow for the *possibility* of "diversity" and "multiculturalism" of a material, substantial kind. If it didn't, I wouldn't be here. The work of liberal-left scholars, especially feminists, *has* constructed a foundation upon which to build. Critical and feminist pedagogy

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enormous student loan debt, I will have less than $1,000 per month to live on (for food, rent, utilities, clothing, etc.)--hardly enough to make new (or used) car payments. Thus, although I will be upwardly mobile and earning a middle-class income, in many ways I will still live as a working-class person. However, unlike my working-class friends back home who never attended college, I will *eventually* make it to a more solid middle-class status--a privilege of which I am very aware.

theorists in particular have been open to critiqueing the academy and their places within it.[37] Such theorists have stressed the importance of acknowledging and examining the embodied subjects present in and absent from the academy at the same time that we discuss those subjects as they are present and absent from the canons of academia. Kathleen Weiler, for example, argues that through "the complexity of issues raised by feminist pedagogy, we can begin to acknowledge the reality of tensions that result from different histories, from privilege, oppression, and power as they are lived by teachers and students in classrooms" ("Freire" 470). "[F]eminist teachers," she explains, "if they are to work to create a counter-hegemonic[38] teaching, must be conscious of their own gendered, classed, and raced subjectivities as they confirm or challenge the lived experiences of their students" (*Women* 145).

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[37] See, for example, *Reconstructing the Academy: Women's Education and Women's Studies*, particularly "The Costs of Exclusionary Practices in Women's Studies." For an excellent bibliography of feminist pedagogy, one that includes a section on theorizing difference, see Carolyn M. Shrewsbury's "Feminist Pedagogy: An Updated Bibliography."

[38] Weiler is drawing from Patti Lather, who argues that Women's Studies is "counter-hegemonic work" (54 *Women*). Lather uses Antonio Gramsci's concepts of hegemony and counter-hegemony to discuss the potential of such work, especially curricular transformation. Defining "hegemony" as "the terrain upon which groups struggle for power" (55 *Women*), she argues that Women's Studies mobilizes "counter-hegemonic forces" which "stymie consensus . . . present alternative conceptions of reality, . . . [and] develop" the subjective conditions necessary for "struggle toward a more equitable social order" (55-6 *Women*), including equity in terms of socio-economic class.

Teachers can serve as role models for their students,[39] especially if they are willing to discuss their specific subjectivities within the context of critical analysis of the culture in which we live.[40] Hearing specific details of how a poor or working-class instructor has survived and come to thrive in the academy will not necessarily change the immediate material circumstances of a poor or working-class student, but it does have the potential to empower that student psychologically and emotionally. And, if instructors of all class backgrounds help poor students through loaning them money for books, or photocopying readings for students until they receive their financial aid, or providing them with part-time jobs (or, as a professor once did for me, anonymously giving them money for something crucial such as prescription glasses), or perhaps most importantly, advocating for their students by working

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[39] In Chapter Five, I discuss role models more extensively, including both the possible rewards and dangers for students. I link this discussion to ways of reading cultural and literary texts as they relate to class, race, and gender subjectivity.

[40] This analysis would be what Henry Giroux terms "[c]ritical pedagogy as a form of cultural politics"--"a deliberate attempt on the part of cultural workers to influence how and what knowledge and subjectivities are produced within particular sets of social relations," thus "drawing attention to the ways in which knowledge, power, desire, and experience are produced under the basic conditions of learning" (*Border* 239); such an analysis would recognize "that knowledge is produced, negotiated, transformed and realized in the *interaction* between the teacher, the learner, and the knowledge itself" (Kenway and Modra, 140).

for policy changes within the academy,[41] that instructor's commitment to "multiculturalism" will become more honest and may be the catalyst for a student remaining in college who might not otherwise do so. Of course, such actions would require what Weiler calls for--a consciousness of our own subjectivities--as well as an acknowledgment of them to our students. We would have to break the silence surrounding class (thus requiring us to discuss how class intersects with other aspects of our subjectivities), in many cases acknowledging our own privileged positions in relation to our students.

Such "silence" relates to what many feminist critics have pointed out as a masculinist bias in the academy that privileges reason, logic, and "objective" fact over emotion and personal narrative. hooks points to not only the gender bias here, but the class bias as well; she argues that the promotion of these masculinist, nonemotional modes of behavior in the classroom translates into an enforcement of "bourgeois values" (*Teaching* 178):

> As silence and obedience to authority [are] most rewarded, students [learn] that this [is] the appropriate demeanor in the classroom. Loudness, anger, emotional outbursts, and even something as seemingly innocuous as unrestrained laughter [are] deemed unacceptable, vulgar disruptions of classroom social order. These traits [are] also associated with being a member of the lower classes. (178)

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[41] See my Conclusion for suggestions of such policy changes.

Students are taught to internalize a "proper" construction of the body, one that M. M. Bakhtin refers to as the "classical" versus the "grotesque" body. As Laura Kipnis explains, following critics who also apply Bakhtin (such as Peter Stallybrass and Allon White), this internalization occurs because of a transcoding process "between bodily and social topography, a transcoding which sets up an homology between the lower bodily stratum and the lower social classes" (376). The "highness" of culture occurs through the "banishment of the low," through "suppressing the grotesque body (which is, in fact, simply the material body)" in favor of a refined, "classical body" that is basically an "orifice-less, laminated surface" (376). The "invention" of this "classical body" takes place culturally through a sort of trickle-down effect, whereby "thresholds of sensitivity and refinement," which begin within the upper class as mechanisms of class distinction that evolve into "standards of privacy, disgust, shame, and embarrassment," are then "gradually, although incompletely, disseminated downward through the social hierarchy" (377). These standards become the "very substance of bourgeois subjectivity"; at first "socially generated," they slowly "become reproduced in individuals as habits, reflexes, as the structure of the modern psyche" (377).

Thus, when students in the classroom--perhaps due to working-class or ethnic subjectivity--speak and behave in

ways that challenge these "habits" and "reflexes," they are, as hooks explains, considered "rude and threatening" by others (*Teaching* 187), most of whom have internalized the bourgeois codes more thoroughly. But these supposedly "vulgar disruptions of classroom social order" can be viewed as ways in which working-class students might *resist* the enforcement of "bourgeois values" in the academy and reassert their own bodily, material presence. hooks argues that "[p]rofessors cannot empower students to embrace diversities of experience, standpoint, behavior, or style if our training has disempowered us" by encouraging only "a single mode of [classroom] interaction based on middle-class values" (*Teaching* 187). She explains that professors often cling to "more comfortable" methods of dealing with class subjectivity--"through the material studied" rather than through "interrogating how class bias shapes conduct in the classroom" or through "transforming their pedagogical process" (*Teaching* 187).

I believe that such a transformation might begin with an open acknowledgement of one's class subjectivity, an acknowledgment that would involve violating the masculinist, bourgeois codes of behavior in the classroom; students' bodies, as well as our own, would become more visible, "louder" one might say, as emotions (linked dialectically to the body) are given voice along with reason (linked dialectically to the mind). It is important, however, that

during this process we make explicit to our students *which* behaviors and discourses are normally upheld by the academy and by the dominant culture and which are not; after all, students do need to learn the dominant, "bourgeios" forms in order to succeed in the academic and corporate worlds. However, they need not blindly internalize these norms. As instructors we can illuminate for them the power dynamics involved in the norms, thus teaching them what is at stake in their deployment. Doing so, however, can also involve giving voice to subjectivities not usually represented or valued by the academy and the dominant culture. As Pat Belanoff points out,

> [w]e need not to settle for teaching students the discourse of the academy and thus invalidating their personal discourse; we should not even be acquiescing in the academy's dichotomizing of disourse [including bodily discourse] into academic and nonacademic. . . . Both we and our students can foster and produce a multiplicity of discourses which all of us can learn to control. (269-70)

Some of us in academia have become accustomed to acknowledgments of our subjectivity in our written scholarship; few, except certain liberal-left and feminist scholars, have made them in the classroom. Yet such acknowledgments in the classroom make the body present as a classed subject in a way that is impossible within a written text. Such a presence is crucial, for, as Kobena Mercer notes, the "identity of the enunciator inevitably 'makes a difference' to the social construction of meaning and value"

("Skin" 193), in this instance the meaning and value students find in our pedagogy. As Patti Lather, quoting Edward Said, points out, sometimes "*who speaks* is [even] more important than *what is said*" (132). Our race, gender, age and other subjectivity factors are already apparent and "'make a difference'"; class does as well, but in more subtle ways,[42] especially perhaps in the way we might "normalize" class subjectivity among our students or equate it only with other factors such as race or gender. To begin to avoid dealing with difference in this "normalizing" manner--in the destructive ways Lorde pinpoints--requires an awareness of the complexity of subjectivity, whether such awareness is expressed through our "multiculturalist" work of transforming the canon or through our work transforming the academy; thus, class must be addressed with the same seriousness and commitment as race and gender have been.

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[42] I believe it is important to resist this subtlety and overcome "bourgeois" conceptions of the body and behavior, when resisting them allows for more effective pedagogical practice. For example, in my Women's Studies classes, I point to the scars on my arm when discussing sexual harassment and the complex intersections of other factors such as class. The scars, I explain, are from second-degree burns inflicted by a supervisor in the kitchen where I had worked as a teenager. (He purposefully burned me in retaliation for my refusing to have sex with him and for reporting him to the feminist administrator of the nursing home.) I explain that the outcome--his enforced retirement, but not firing--would have been very different had a feminist not been the administrator; I also explain that due to my class position I had no recourse to legal action or medical care, and that I felt extremely lucky to have escaped the situation with only the scars--losing the job might have meant becoming a prostitute.

What we need, then, in addition to the "multiculturalism" that focuses on canon and curriculum is what Henry Giroux, following Teresa de Lauretis, terms a pedagogy *of* and *for* difference. Citing de Lauretis, Giroux explains that a pedagogy *of* difference addresses how "the representations and practices of difference are actively learned, internalized, challenged, or transformed," while a pedagogy *for* difference "is characterized by 'an ongoing effort to create new spaces of discourse, to rewrite cultural narratives, and to define the terms of another perspective--a view from elsewhere'" ("Schooling" 142). This type of critical pedagogy involves "a critical interrogation of the silences and tensions between the master narratives" of the academy and "the self-representations of subordinate groups as they might appear in 'forgotten' histories, texts, memories, experiences, and community narratives" ("Schooling 142), and, I would add, in "narratives" of the body. What I am attempting to enact, then, and hope that other scholars will find relevant to their own work, is a fusion of feminist theory/practice that examines such "self-representations . . . in 'forgotten' . . . texts"--the multiculturalist work of canon transformation--with "a critical interrogation" of the "master narrative" of classlessness in the academy, a narrative that effaces the presence of certain raced, classed and gendered bodies. Such a fusion is a necessary

response to the "paranoia" I feel when I notice the absence of self-constructed working-class subjects from the canon of literature I happen to specialize in--Victorian literature--and the absence of poor and working-class subjects from the academy itself.

CHAPTER 3
THE 'RESPECTABLES' AND THE 'ROUGHS': CONSTRUCTIONS OF SUBJECTIVITY AND CLASS

> The most troubling masks of class are moral--those which define [class] differences . . . in terms of basic moral standards. (Demott 105)
>
> [F]or centuries the poor of whatever ethnicity have been seen as lazy, stupid, worthless, visceral, improvident, self-indulgent, morally depraved, criminally inclined, incapable of self-improvement, creatures of impulse and violence, and self-victimizing . . . . (Parenti 136)
>
> Perhaps the most important division of all . . . was the line between the 'roughs' and the 'respectables,' . . . [between those who did not and those who did adhere] to the canons of respectability. (Perkin 120-21)

At first glance, it may be difficult to find some connection between the canons of literature upheld by the academy and the "canons of respectability" referred to by Joan Perkin. These "canons of respectability" were standards imposed in Victorian society upon women and men that determined whether or not one was "respectable"--morally upright, decent, hard-working, deserving of society's "respect"--or "rough"--criminal, immoral, and lazy, and thus subject to what Michael Parenti identifies as a centuries old stereotype of the poor and working classes. The standards and values of the academy in the United States today may seem far removed from those of Victorian England;

"canons of literature" and "canons of respectability" appear as separate entities, bearing little resemblance to one another, having little influence upon one another. However, by focusing primarily upon the way the latter canon constructs, shapes, and defines the former,[1] I will demonstrate that the two canons do indeed impact upon one another. I will argue that such an influence occurs even within the context of feminist and liberal-left revisions of the literary canon that have contributed to what is commonly termed "multiculturalism."[2]

The "canons of respectability" that Joan Perkin references related primarily to constructions of class in the Victorian Period. We must first understand these constructions and the assumptions behind them before we can explain their connection to class-biased constructions of the literary canon, constructions that, despite the advent of multiculturalism in the academy, still uphold standards of "respectability" and "roughness" inherited from Victorian culture. Constructions of literature are not separable, after all, from constructions of history; literature, like

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[1] For discussion of how certain literary and nonliterary works functioned to shape Victorian codes and mores, especially those concerning women, see Nancy Armstrong's *Desire and Domestic Fiction* and Elizabeth Langland's *Nobody's Angels: Middle-class Women and Domestic Ideology*.

[2] See my discussion of "multiculturalism" in Chapter Two, which includes an examination of multiculturalist discourses operative in the academy and the way they can function to de-materialize class subjectivity.

canon formation, is situated in history, and subject to historical, as well as political and social forces. As John Guillory contends, "[t]he canon is itself an historical event"--it is "a considerable part of the matter of history" (244); similarly, the "matter of history" is "a considerable part" of the literary canon, and thus I turn to a specific construction of that "matter of history" to situate current constructions of the literary canon. While I detail in Chapters One and Two some of the ways in which poor and working-class people have been excluded from the academy and how that exclusion results from the myth of classlessness and certain discourses of multiculturalism that perpetuate it, I am interested in this chapter in examining that exclusion as it relates specifically to the Victorian "respectable"/"rough" dichotomy--to "canons of respectability"--as well as to "canons" of literature and history and how these canons have functioned to de-materialize issues of class.

Perkin contends that the "important division" between the "respectables" and the "roughs" derived not so much from material or economic conditions but from moral attitudes and behaviors: "[i]t was not a horizontal line between the higher and lower paid or between the skilled and the less skilled. It was a diagonal line which cut across all the economic layers" (120). Perkin insists upon this "diagonal line," even though the majority of "roughs" came from the

lower economic levels of the working class and the "respectables" from the higher strata. Like a number of other historians, she explains "respectability" as an acceptance of bourgeois values and moral codes by not only middle-class people but also a particular segment of working-class. As Peter Bailey points out, it is now common in historical research to

> identify respectability as a highly specific value system of considerable normative power, whose most important consequence was to incorporate a minor but significant sector of the working class into the social consensus that assured mid-Victorian society in particular its overall cohesion and stability. (336)

However, historians such as Bailey, as well as a few others like Gareth Stedman Jones and Thomas Laqueur, have questioned this interpretation, arguing, instead, that the issue is far more complex and that certain material factors --not a simple process of embourgeoisement of a segment of the working class by the middle class--were instrumental in these constructions; they contend that working-class people created their own culture, their own "respectable" or "rough" forms of values and behaviors, which often resisted the bourgeois forms that the middle class attempted to impose.[3] They point to a class bias, then, in the ways these "canons of respectability" have been reconstructed by historians.

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[3] See, for example, Gareth Stedman Jone's "Working-class Culture and Working-class Politics in London, 1870-1900: Notes on the Remaking of a Working Class."

Looking briefly at one example--Perkin's construction of a specific group of Victorians: married women--will demonstrate the type of class bias these historians note; such an examination will also begin to expose the de-materialization of class present in historical discourses used to construct "canons of respectability." In her book, *Women and Marriage in Nineteenth-century England*, Perkin examines the ways in which nineteenth-century British women experienced marriage, providing a detailed account of married women's material circumstances, their relationship to the law, and their values and ideological position concerning the emancipation of women. Her chapters on working-class women immediately indicate a particular class bias, however. Throughout, she constructs these women as having *chosen* their material and social positions due to their moral attitudes and behaviors, and she indicates that their poverty was their own fault and had nothing to do with capitalist exploitation, as exemplified by the following statements:

> If the poor had been prudent and careful they would not have had children at all; they could have lived on their wages and put a little by for old age. But the fact was that they wanted to have children. . . . 'the more the better' they used to say. Comparatively few of the poorest families deliberately neglected a sick or weakly child or accepted the survival of the fittest theory . . . . (171)

While she says here that the "neglect" was not "deliberate" on the part of these parents, she clearly implies that they

did neglect their children. I would argue that it was the capitalist system itself that neglected all of them, adult and child alike. With no apparent use of irony in her tone, she implies that working-class people should have "just said no" to sex, and then they would not have "neglected" anyone, "deliberately" or not, because their poverty would have disappeared.[4]

Her sympathies obviously lie with the "middle-class wife and mother," whom she claims "was the most vulnerable" of all classes of married women "if [her] marriage began to go sour" (7). The middle-class woman was "most affected by the laws of marriage," she contends, because she had neither the trust funds, marriage settlements, and overall social power of upper-class wives, nor what she terms the "innocence of the law" that working-class wives supposedly benefitted from (7); she effaces, of course, the dire material circumstances of working-class women in cases of desertion by their husbands. She argues that middle-class men had more power over their wives than working-class men--they knew the law and could and often did exert their legal rights: taking the wife's children and property. Working-class women, she contends, were far less vulnerable--were

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[4] On the other hand, when she discusses "respectable" working-class women, she claims that they chose to abstain from sex because they bought into prudish, bourgeois Victorian values (150). Such women might have abstained, however, in order to keep family size down--for material, economic reasons, and not due to bourgeois morality.

"beyond the reach of civil law" (115)--because their husbands did not know the law. Such an "innocence of the law" becomes irrelevant, however, when we consider working-class women's material "reality." Certainly, working-class men seldom took their wives' property and wages or insisted upon keeping the children (115). However, because working-class women had no property and earned only below subsistence wages, without a man's additional earnings they usually ended up in the workhouse and were separated from their children anyway by work, disease, or death.

Perkin's class bias is also apparent in the very titles she uses for her chapters on working-class women: the one dealing with "respectable" working-class women is entitled "A Life of Willing Sacrifice," and the other, dealing with "rough" working-class women, is entitled "Rough and Ready Women." Just the words "Willing" in the former title and "Ready" in the latter indicate her belief that these women *chose* their "respectable" or "rough" status, and the following description of the "respectables" and the "roughs" demonstrates her assessment that the division between the two groups "was not simply a question of one group earning more than the other, but of values, attitudes, lifestyles and leisure patterns" (130) divorced from material circumstances:

> [to] be respectable working class in the nineteenth century meant not living a riotous life, not drinking or gambling heavily or using bad language, not going in for rough sports or

> pastimes, believing in chastity before marriage and fidelity afterwards, and not getting into debt. What really distinguished respectables from roughs was their aspirations for themselves and their children, their willingness to sacrifice pleasure for duty, and their capacity for building collective organisations to cover the contingencies of their lives. They admired thrift, clean living, pride, independence of spirit, the hiding of misfortune, making the best of things. . . . Respectability was not an external matter. . . . It meant having a good self-image, a sense of one's self as a self-respecting being. Dressing respectably and keeping up respectable appearances helped to sustain this. The alternative was ruin. . . . (131)

Respectability also meant attending church versus the pub, although Perkin explains that "[i]t was the dedication and fervour of the church and pub attendance that made the difference, not the mere fact" (120).

From Perkin's description, it is apparent that she attributes very little to one's material circumstances--to "external matter[s]"--and almost all to one's "aspirations," "willingness to sacrifice pleasure for duty," and "self-image." Clearly, one's morality, then, and one's sense of self, not one's material, economic circumstances, determined whether one was "respectable" or "rough," according to Perkin. In fact, she asserts that members of the respectable working class were those who "had the energy and determination to marshall their meagre resources and steer clear of debt, drunkenness and what they called 'low living'" (155). One's "energy and determination" are separated here from one's material circumstances; because

the "alternative" to "respectability" was "ruin," lack of respectability *caused* one's material circumstances, according to Perkin; it cannot be the other way around for her. However, individuals can pursue a number of different courses within comparable material circumstances, perhaps for moral *as well as material reasons*, or for either; in addition, they might have all the "energy and determination" in the world, but certain material barriers could arise that result in their "ruin"--their falling into debt, for example.

Indeed, many of the criteria for "roughness"--drinking heavily and indebtedness, for example--can be directly caused by material circumstances as much, if not more so, than by morality (a physical addiction to alcohol, inability to earn a living above the poverty line); and similarly, many aspects of respectability--attending church, avoiding sex before (and during) marriage, remaining out of debt--certainly could be caused by a person's desire to improve or maintain his or her material circumstances, and may, in fact, have little to do with one's morality. A married working-class woman might not care, for example, whether or not her husband drinks heavily, as long as there's enough money for the family to live fairly comfortably;[5] however,

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[5] As the historian Jane Lewis points out, evidence suggests that [in nineteenth-century England] working-class wives were [actually] prepared to put up with occasional drinking bouts by their husbands and [even] the physical abuse that sometimes accompanied them rather than lose the

when material well-being is at stake--the husband is literally drinking up the food money or beating his wife nearly to death in an enraged stupor--a working-class wife has substantial reasons to disdain the consumption of alcohol, reasons that have, perhaps, no connection whatsoever to moral issues. She might not leave her husband until the material conditions of remaining with him are worse than those if she stayed, however, regardless of her moral views on drinking, violence, and indebtedness.

Church attendance, as another example, probably related more to material conditions than morality because this attendance was connected with the Sunday School, which provided working-class people with a number of material benefits. As Thomas Laqueur points out, Sunday Schools provided educational, social, and recreational services not readily available to the working classes"[6] (186). Thus, there were reasons other than "respectable" moral and

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economic support usually provided by husbands" (10). Their tolerance of such behavior, then, does not mean that they necessarily found it morally acceptable; it was, rather, materially necessary.

[6] In terms of education, it wasn't until 1870, with the passing of the Education Act, that voluntary schools began being replaced by state schools (Harrison 288). According to J. F. C. Harrison, the voluntary schools--a system of public elementary education set up mainly by the British and Foreign School Society (nonconformist) and the National Society (Church of England)--were "still failing by 1870 to provide schooling for more than half the children in London and for only a third to a fifth of the children elsewhere" (288). Thus, Sunday Schools were extremely important in the education of the working classes.

religious values--in particular, the secular education provided by Sunday Schools--for working-class people to attend. And while many historians contend that Sunday Schools were merely a vehicle for the middle and upper classes to "discipline" the working classes and impose their social ideas upon them, Laqueur provides substantial evidence to counter this view.[7] Arguing against E. P. Thompson's assertions in particular, Laqueur demonstrates that Sunday Schools were basically controlled by the working classes themselves, and, in fact, "grew out of the working class as a means of fulfilling the real and perceived needs of the community" (189).

Equating the "respectability" and values upheld by the Sunday Schools with those of the middle classes is extremely problematic, as are other historical analyses of class relations that equate working-class "respectability" with bourgeois values. As Peter Bailey points out,

> the evidence now taken [by historians] to support the idea of a stable and exclusive constituency of working-class respectables is often . . . anonymous and disembodied, episodic and elliptical . . . an artificial composite, put together from limited instances of respectable behaviour and its rhetoric, rather than from a sustained collective biography of its constituents. (339)

He explains that the "trappings of respectability" were episodically and superficially assumed by working-class

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[7] See his book, *Religion and Respectability: Sunday Schools and Working-class Culture, 1780-1850*, in particular Chapter Seven, "Sunday Schools and Social Control."

people and did not necessarily indicate any level of moral commitment: "Climbing into the sober garb of the Sunday suit, for example, was no prophylactic against the customary resort to the pub, and best clothes could be openly surrendered to the pawnbroker on Monday without loss of face" (342).

And Sunday school attendance and church attendance, while connected, were still two very different things; the working classes attended church far less often. As Gareth Stedman Jones notes, "[w]here the poor did attend church, it was generally for material reasons" like church charity. The moment this charity was withdrawn, however, "the congregation disappeared. It was a pleasant irony that the poor should adopt a purely utilitarian attitude in the one realm in which the middle class considered it to be inappropriate" ("Working-class" 471). Jones cites a missionary who told a Victorian scholar compiling a survey of "religious influences" in London during the late nineteenth century, "'You can buy a congregation, but it melts away as soon as the payments cease'" (502). Paying such close attention to the material aspects of class construction reveals, then, that the working classes were neither passive yet "respectable" receptor sites of embourgeoisement nor "rough," out-of-control circuits in the moral hardware of capitalism. Scholarship such as Jones's, however, which makes the "payments"--the material forces

behind constructions of class--visible, has been only a recent phenomenon in historical reconstructions of the Victorian "canons of respectability."

Similarly, until only a few decades ago, the "canons of literature" we study in the academy were also not considered to have any basis in material or economic factors, let alone factors of identity such as gender, race, class or sexual orientation; rather, they were considered to derive from "a diagonal line which cut across" all authors of literature, imposing high, "respectable" standards of aesthetic value, not "low" standards of classism, racism, sexism, homophobia and the like. Of course, these "low" standards did (and still do) exist, and scholars have recently begun to expose them. The overlapping projects of canon reformation and multiculturalism have coincided, not so insignificantly, with the entrance in the last few decades of more women, working- and middle-class people, and people of color into the academy.[8] Before the advent of feminist literary criticism and scholarship, for example, women were underrepresented in the literary canon because their work was considered by predominantly upper-class white men to be inferior: most of it was deemed too "low" in aesthetic quality to be admitted into the canon. Masculinist

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[8] However, as I document in Chapter Two, the academy is still not truly "multicultural" or "diverse," especially in terms of race and class; the same could be said of the literary canon.

aesthetic judgment determined whether a work of literature was "respectable" enough to gain such entrance.

As Joanna Russ points out in *How to Suppress Women's Writing*, these masculinist "[c]anons of excellence and conceptions of excellence [needed to] change, perhaps beyond recognition" (200) before "the anomalousness of the woman writer" that resulted in women writers' "permanent marginality" could be overcome. This "anomalousness," this process by which a token few women writers were admitted into the canon of literature prior to feminist critical and theoretical intervention, is worth examining for its broader social implications. The process seems to parallel the one by which "anomalous" working-class people have been granted --both in the nineteenth century as well as today--token acceptance into the realm of "respectability" and thus outside of the restrictive classist stereotype Parenti describes. Their superior morals--which include, of course, their adherence to the work ethic, to a drive to "better themselves"--are like the "anomalous" woman writer's superior aesthetic skills; *they* are responsible, not classism, not material circumstances imposed upon them by a capitalist culture. Only the "respectable" few, then--the deserving, hard-working few--make it into the middle-class world and the middle-class academy. And those who make it in are seen as having merely adopted the "superior" values of the class above them--they have, in effect, *become* middle

class; they are not viewed as possessing, because they do not have them to possess, their own positive, class-distinctive forms of values and behavior. The working-class forms could only be "rough," inferior, and thus would have to be cast off to enter the realm of middle-class respectability.

As I argue in previous chapters, poor and working-class people who do *not* gain access to this "respectability"--which basically equates to a movement "up" to middle-class status--those who do not acquire this middle-class status because they have failed to gain access to the academy and thus to a middle-class occupation,[9] are considered responsible for their own failure. They are blamed, just as certain women writers were once blamed for not "making it" into the canon of literature. And they are judged as moral failures because of the myth that in the United States we are all *potentially* part of what Benjamin DeMott terms the "Imperial Middle" class--those "*men and women of the middle united as strivers and self-betterers*" (41), those people who control their own destiny merely through their superior moral qualities and behavior. Making it into the "respectable" position of the Imperial Middle is much like making it into the "respectable" position of being

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[9] In Chapter Two I demonstrate the link between higher education and access to higher paying, "middle-class" jobs.

canonized: both depend upon a supposed *individual* effort, rather than upon conducive material circumstances.[10]

Just as class has been de-materialized in the academy through the structure of that institution, one which reproduces a stratified class system that is itself rendered invisible through a process of interpellation,[11] as well as through certain discourses--even some that are "multiculturalist"--class subjectivity has been de-materialized in certain constructions of the literary canon and of history. This de-materialization has been perpetrated, I contend, through a method similar to the one used to keep women writers out of the literary canon. It is important to examine the way in which judgments based upon morality versus a materiality of class and classism seem to parallel (indeed, in terms of a working-class literary canon are interconnected with) the masculinist judgments of aesthetic taste used to suppress women's writing in general.

Russ succinctly outlines these assessments, which were used to blame women writers for their own marginalization.

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[10] See my Introduction and Chapter Two for further explanation of these "material" circumstances.

[11] In Chapters One and Two I discuss Althusser's concept of interpellation and its relation to the process of "normalization" in our culture that renders invisible the ways in which capitalism reproduces itself. Althusser identifies the educational system as one of the Ideological State Apparatuses involved in this reproduction. My analysis here, as well as in previous chapters, functions to reveal that reproductive process by examining some of the particular methods through which it operates.

The following statements and their application to women writers, she argues, accomplished the suppression:

> *She didn't write it [literature].*
> *She wrote it, but she shouldn't have.*
> *She wrote it, but look what she wrote about.*
> *She wrote it, but 'she' isn't really an artist and 'it' isn't really serious, of the right genre--i.e., really art.*
> *She wrote it, but she wrote only one of it.*
> *She wrote it, but it's only interesting/included in the canon for one, limited reason.*
> *She wrote it, but there are very few of her.* (194)

Feminist critics have struggled against this suppression through "the unearthing and reinterpretation of 'lost' works by women writers, and the documentation of their lives and careers" (Showalter 272); indeed, a substantial portion of the project of "multiculturalism" has involved these gendered revisions of the canon, which create what Elaine Showalter terms a "female literary tradition" (272). In terms of class, however, such revisions have been rather limited, especially in the area of British literature.

While feminist critics in American literary studies have begun recently to include in their constructions of this "female literary tradition" more works by nineteenth- and twentieth-century poor and working-class women, especially women of color, feminist literary scholarship on British literature, particularly that of the nineteenth-century, focuses primarily on white, middle-class women writers. And that focus has tended to homogenize these writers' class positionings as simply "middle class,"

without much examination of the variety of positionings within that class. Margaret Oliphant, for example, a writer from a lower middle-class Scottish family who supported herself, her children, and numerous family members through her writing, had a vastly different class (and thus gender) experience than say George Eliot or even the Brontës. Unlike Eliot, however, Oliphant has been quite unjustly excluded from the literary canon. If, as Virginia Woolf notes, "towards the end of the eighteenth century a change came about . . . . The middle-class woman began to write" (65), it is important, then, to recognize how that "woman" was multiplicitous along trajectories of ethnicity, race, and class and to consider whether or not a restricted focus on a very particular, homogenized form of middle-class identity has had an impact on canon formation. After all, one's particular class positioning could certainly have an impact on what one writes, and thus the "*she wrote it, but look what she wrote about*" judgment might influence canonization, even in the new "female literary tradition."

As Paul Lauter points out, in the case of working-class women writers in general, their choice of subject matter includes certain "class-based distinctions" that critics, if applying "bourgeois" aesthetic standards, will either overlook in their readings or will use to judge the work as low or "rough," as not even worthy of notice. But such

"distinctions" are important, he contends, to completing the "picture" painted by a female literary tradition:

> working-class women's literature--by dealing with such concerns as work and especially work for wages, organizing with other women, and the fear of desertion and physical violence--completes the picture of women's lives that bourgeois forms show only in fragments. Such female experiences, their commonalities and class-based distinctions, come into focus best when we base our work on women's historical reality rather than on the literary distinctions created primarily by male and bourgeois critics. ("Working-class" 846)

Given that lower middle-class women writers would probably have some "female experiences" to draw from that relate more to those of working-class rather than upper middle-class women--especially issues like "work[ing] for wages" and fearing "desertion and physical violence"--it is necessary to consider "commonalities and class-based distinctions" even *within* a particular class, as well as across what are often very fluid class boundaries. In order to recognize these "commonalities" and "distinctions," however, we need to avoid imposing what are not only masculinist but also "bourgeois" aesthetic value judgments upon the texts we read and study.

Unfortunately, if we turn to the canon of Victorian literature to look for working-class writers, especially working-class *women fiction* writers, we find some of the same critical judgments that Russ found operating against women writers as a group. The one that creates the most barriers to including working-class writers in the female

literary tradition is, of course, the "*[s]he didn't write it*" decree. Before exploring the gender-specific aspect of this decree, however, we first need to explore the "*they didn't write it*" pronouncement as it applies to working-class Victorian literature in general, and to fiction in particular, because "they" did write "it," but that "they" is restricted to a particular group of men and that "it" to certain genres of literature, ones that do not often include fiction.

Raymond Williams argues that "[a]ll through the nineteenth century, there *were* working-class writers. Only they were rarely writing novels"; novels written by members of the working classes were, instead, "a twentieth-century phenomenon" ("Working-class" 114, emphasis mine). He explains the absence of such a phenomenon in the nineteenth century as resulting from the different "commitment" and "alignment" of working-class versus middle-class writers. He contends that because the writer is "born into a social situation with all its specific perspectives, and into a language, [he or she] begins by being aligned" ("The Writer" 86); this "alignment" impacts upon "the actual and available forms of writing" ("The Writer" 86) from which the writer has to choose. Explaining that a writer's "commitment" intersects with this "alignment," Williams argues that the "professional ideology of the independent artist," with its reliance upon freedom to compete in the market, is based in

"a classic bourgeois definition of freedom" ("The Writer" 82); this definition excluded many working-class writers. They could not, he contends, access such a "freedom" because its definition was dependent upon viewing "society as represented by the market"--"there could be no question of any other significant social commitments" ("The Writer" 82) --and thus the working class, having these other "social commitments," could not take on the "professional ideology of the independent artist."[12]

Instead, Williams argues, working-class writers steered away from the form most frequently utilized by these "independent artists"--the novel--and "wrote marvellous autobiographies," a genre related to oral forms more accessible to them,[13] such as religious confessions and defense speech at trials ("The Writer" 86).[14] "The novel,"

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[12] It is interesting to note that Williams' argument breaks down immediately when applied to middle-class *women* writers, many of whom, simply because of the dominant, restrictive notions of gender operative in the Victorian period, had "other significant social commitments"--family duties in particular. Certainly, middle-class women were not "free to compete in the market" in the same way that middle-class men were.

[13] For a differing view on autobiography as a form more accessible to the working class, see Roy Pascal's *Design and Truth in Autobiography*, in which he argues that autobiography is a middle-class form of narrative.

[14] Again, if we apply Williams' theory to middle-class *women* writers, it breaks down. They fit his construction of being outside the realm of the bourgeois ideal of the independent artist, and yet they wrote primarily fiction. Williams seems to rely upon the assumption that a group needs a tradition to draw upon before being able to write in a particular form. Nineteenth-century middle-class women,

he asserts, "with its quite different narrative forms was virtually impenetrable to working-class writers for three or four generations"; it is, he concludes, a "bourgeois" form--the "literary form of another class" than the one the working-class writers belonged to, and thus "very few [working-class writers] managed to write good or even any novels" ("The Writer" 86). In short, when it comes to writing novels, Williams proclaims that "*they didn't do it*," or if "*they did [do] it, [then] they shouldn't have*" (because the novels were no "good").

If we accept Williams' judgment that the working classes wrote primarily "marvellous autobiographies," we understand, at least to some extent, why these writers as a group have been excluded from the literary canon. Their autobiographies have been studied by historians, but not as often by literary critics:[15] "*they wrote it, but 'they'*

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however, hardly had such a tradition of women fiction writers from which to draw. Virginia Woolf argues that because the novel was a relatively new genre of literature, it was more accessible to middle-class women; it was an *absence* of a tradition of fiction written by *men* that Woolf claims gave women greater access to this form.

[15] Exceptions include Martha Vicinus' *The Industrial Muse: A Study of Nineteenth Century British Working-Class Literature*, Nan Hackett's *XIX Century British Working-Class Autobiographies: An Annotated Bibliography*, Reginia Gagnier's *Subjectivities: A History of Self-Representation in Britain, 1832-1920*, and Julia Swindells' *Victorian Writing and Working Women: the Other Side of Silence*, as well as primarily feminist literary critical analyses of the diaries of the Victorian maidservant Hannah Cullwick. Most of the literary scholarship on working-class Victorian autobiography seems to be done by feminist critics committed to bringing women writers into the literary canon.

aren't really artists and 'it' isn't really serious, of the right genre--i.e., really art." The genre of autobiography, at least as written by the working class, was not "respectable" enough to be the subject of "serious" literary criticism. Williams also argues that these working-class writers utilized the genres of verse, work-songs, and pamphlets, but to a lesser extent than autobiography ("Working-class" 114). As Martha Vicinus' work demonstrates, however, ballads, broadsides, and music-hall songs were actually the most popular forms of "literature" used by the working class, forms even less "respectable" in terms of access to canonization. She makes the point, similar to Russ's about masculinist "[c]anons of excellence," that these forms are typically not considered literature and thus have been excluded:

> [w]hat we call literature, and what we teach, is what the middle class--and not the working class--produced. Our definitions of literature and our canons of taste are class bound; we currently exclude street literature, songs, hymns, dialect and oral storytelling, but they were the most popular forms used by the working class. (1)

Vicinus is correct that most of these forms are not judged as constituting "real" literature--that they are not "proper" genres--and perhaps this is the reason that Williams downplays their significance, emphasizing instead the genre of autobiography, which, although not considered to be as "real" a genre as say poetry or fiction, is certainly far more accepted. However, Vicinus's statement

that "[w]hat we call literature"--presumably poetry, drama, and fiction--"is what the middle class--and not the working class--produced" tends to exclude the possibility that working-class writers utilized any of these *supposedly* "respectable" and "middle-class" forms. Perhaps they did write in these forms, albeit less often than in the ones cited by Vicinus and Williams. Until a search for writing by working-class people in these genres is enacted, a search similar to the one feminist literary critics have been engaging in for "lost" women writers, we cannot make such conclusive statements. To do so, even in the name of acknowledging and condemning the oppressive conditions under which working-class people live--conditions that created barriers to their writing in certain genres--is to relegate the working class to a dangerous position of complete powerlessness; it also discounts, prior to any investigation, the possibility that working-class people could use such genres to resist bourgeois values or to inscribe their own class-distinctive values. Such a critical practice seems much like the historical research that has relegated the working class to either positions of "respectability" achieved through embourgeoisement or "roughness" linked to "low" morality.

Perhaps, as Paul Lauter argues in "Caste, Class, and Canon," we need to see the way in which "canon--that is, selection--[is] related to, indeed a function of, critical

technique" (228). Lauter cites the important work of Williams and Vicinus, applauding their emphasis on literary genres that formalist, "elitist" critics would dismiss as inferior. He rightfully questions what "good art" means as it is applied to literature, especially when we literary critics make comparisons among literary works that result in certain ones being excluded from the canon. As he contends, "the relationship of canon and critical practice" involved with such judgments is a crucial one, for it occurs at a "'crossroads' of literature and politics" (240); "critical tactics carry with them," he notes, substantial "ideological baggage" (238). To ignore this "baggage" is to ignore the agenda-laden construction of canon, of what does and does not constitutes "good" literature. Certain aesthetic forms, are the products of certain material environments, ones which the poor and working classes probably could not access. When Lauter claims that "there probably are no working-class metaphysical poets" ("Caste" 234), it is because that type of poetry was the product of a very specific class-privileged environment: the courtier tradition of the late Renaissance and early 17th century. Similarly, when he says, "I do not believe that somewhere out there is a working-class poet, ignored through bourgeois prejudice, who actually wrote better metaphysical poems than Donne or more singular odes than Shelley" ("Caste" 234), it is not because the working-class poet could have no talent,

but rather, because he or she would not have had access to the type of classical education required to produce such metaphysical poems or Romantic odes.

However, we might apply Lauter's theory to the work of Vicinus and Williams in another way, noticing its tendency to utilize, no doubt without intention, what could be a potentially classist "critical technique." In its efforts to emphasize traditionally noncanonical forms of literature and to highlight the oppressive conditions under which working-class people lived, their work tends to exclude the possibility that working-class writers could have used *some* canonical forms, and perhaps even subversively. After all, aesthetic forms, even those traditionally privileged by the academy, can be revised and transformed so that they transmit other ideologies besides those of the "bourgeois" and ruling classes. For example, the novel, in its fairly loose formal requirements, is particularly susceptible to this type of revisionary move. Williams' assertion that "very few [working-class Victorian writers] managed to write *good* or even any novels" (86, emphasis mine) is somewhat disturbing, then, if we accept the possibility that Williams' "good" here might, inadvertently, mean "bourgeois," for after all, he considers the novel to be an exclusively "bourgeois" form.

While he, along with Lauter, basically argues that genres are ISAs, ideologically laden forms, he fails to

recognize that a number of working-class novels may not have been discovered yet because the academy itself is an ISA; canonization is intricately tied to the classist structure of the academy. This structure excludes working-class scholars in general--both as students and as teachers: working-class people are viewed as "roughs," as those who exist outside of the "canons of respectability," and thus they must not enter the academy except as janitors, physical plant workers, construction workers, secretaries, etc. Without the "proper" level of economic, social, cultural, educational, and symbolic capital--capital that is kept from them through the capitalist system--they are also kept out of the "respectable" scholar positions in the academy. The academy is structured to reproduce class ideology, and canon formation often operates in that reproduction through what John Guillory terms the "social effects of the canonical form--the syllabus, the curriculum, the classroom itself" (243). Working-class people are seldom represented by any of these three. Until quite recently in the U.S. (immediately following World War II), only predominantly wealthy, white men had access to the academy and thus had the power and credentials to research and discover a working-class Victorian novelist.[16] I seriously doubt that

[16] See my discussion in Chapter Two of the class structure of the academy, especially its history in terms of who had access to higher education and thus to constructing and perpetuating literary canons.

many of these scholars (if any) attempted such scholarship, given not only their personal positions, but also the monocultural imperatives of the Literary Canon of Great Works (read, "mostly middle- and upper-class white men") that went unchallenged at the time.

But that Canon *has been challenged* in recent decades, and part of that challenge has included discoveries of literary works that make skepticism like that of Williams highly problematic. I cannot help but think of writers who lived under extremely oppressive conditions yet who managed to write "good" literature, and by "good" I am imposing a standard different than the one often utilized by traditional critics; my standard[17] valorizes representations of class, race, gender, sexual orientation, age, and other forms of subjectivity that have been, until recently, excluded from the literary canon. I cannot help but think of the impressive volume of literature by women of various races and ethnicities that has only recently been discovered

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[17] I believe that such standards are not only necessary, but unavoidable, for the simple reason that we always already utilize canons through the selection of texts used to construct our syllabi and our courses. Just as there is no such thing as a course that is free from ideology, there is no magically a-canonical course or a-canonical discipline. A plurality of canons, however, ones that are heterogeneous in terms of their representation of diverse subjectivities--for example, those employed by many feminist literary critics and pedagogues--can function to deconstruct the traditional, standard canons that still operate in the academy despite ultra-conservative critics' claims to the contrary. For a discussion of the debate over multiculturalism, a debate that centers around these more heterogeneous canons, see my Introduction and Chapter Two.

by feminist critics. Williams' skepticism concerning working-class Victorian novelists seems unfounded if we consider, in particular, two recent discoveries of writers who were ignored because of classist, sexist, and racist prejudice, and yet who truly did write "good" literature, if we utilize aesthetic standards that are not classist, sexist, and racist. These writers existed despite their greater oppression compared with that faced by working-class writers in Victorian society.

The American slave of the nineteenth century undoubtedly held a position lowest on the class ladder, far below that of the working classes of Europe or the United States during the same time period, and yet Harriet Jacobs and Harriet Wilson managed to write *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* and *Our Nig*, respectively. Jean Fagan Yellin, a feminist "resisting reader,"[18] had to believe, going against all "received opinion" (vii), that the class-privileged, white abolitionist Lydia Maria Child had not, as critics claimed throughout most of the twentieth century, written *Incidents*, that she was, instead, only its editor. Yellin had to believe that a slave woman could actually live

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[18] See my discussion in Chapter Five of Judith Fetterley's notion of feminists as "resisting readers" who work against the grain of their patriarchal "emasculation"--a learned form that makes women "think as men, to identify with a male point of view, and to accept as legitimate a male system of values, one of whose central principles is misogyny" (*Resisting* xx). I apply Fetterley's concept to class, positing the potential to read against the "bourgeois" grain and become "working-class" readers.

for seven years in a cramped garret, hidden from her master, that she could secure her own freedom and that of her two children, that she could write such an impressive narrative *by herself*. And Henry Louis Gates Jr., another "resisting reader," had to believe, despite the fact that the author he discovered had been "ignored or overlooked both by her 'colored brethren universally' and even by the most scrupulous scholars . . . [for] one hundred and twenty-three years" (xiii), that that author--the slave woman Harriet Wilson--was indeed "probably the first Afro-American to publish a *novel* in the United States" (xiii, emphasis mine). Given the discovery of Jacobs and Wilson, I cannot help but believe that there could be more than just a "very few [working-class Victorian writers who] managed to write good or even any novels" (Williams "The Writer," 86). Until substantial research is completed, I do not see how we can make judgments such as Williams' on the virtual nonexistence of these writers. They sound suspiciously like the ones cited by Joanna Russ that were used to exclude women's writing, traditionally canonical and noncanonical forms, from the canon.

While women, especially those who lived in poverty or even in slavery, obviously had far less access to education, including basic literacy, than most men of the middle and upper classes, to assume that some of them could not have written literature by utilizing a canonical form such as the

novel is highly problematic, as are the very standards that determine what is and is not "good" literature. Such assumptions and standards render these women absolute victims who were unable to resist their oppression through self-education and writing.[19] If we consider the material circumstances under which Jacobs and Wilson managed to learn to write and to write "well" (by feminist revisionary, not oppressive traditional, standards)--the most oppressive being the penalty of whipping or *death* if discovered in the act of writing, learning to write, or teaching another to do so--we must allow for at least the *possibility* of a number of working-class Victorian novelists.

Jacobs herself emphasizes the enormous differences during the nineteenth century between the oppression of black slaves and of the working classes in England:

> . . . the condition of even the meanest and most ignorant among them was vastly superior to the condition of the most favored slave in America. They labored hard; but they were not ordered out to toil while the stars were in the sky, and driven and slashed by an overseer, through heat and cold, til the stars shone out again. Their

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[19] A number of scholars provide substantial evidence that poor and working-class women (and men, of course) had a certain level of access to such literacy. For example, Paul Thomas Murphy points out that in the nineteenth century, "the reading material of working-class children was widely divergent" (13), and he cites the availability of chapbooks, broadsides, small home libraries, school libraries, occasional free admission to circulating libraries, periodicals, local newspapers, the Bible, and even the sign-board literature of public-houses and shops (13-14). See also David Vincent's *Bread, Knowledge, and Freedom: A Study of Nineteenth-century Working-class Autobiography*, especially Chapter Six, "The Pursuit of Books."

> homes were very humble; but they were protected by the law. No insolent patrols could come, in the dead of night, and flog them at their pleasure . . . . No master or overseer could come and take from [the working-class man] his wife, or his daughter. . . . Much was being done to enlighten these poor people. Schools were established among them, and benevolent societies were active in efforts to ameliorate their condition. There was no law forbidding them to read or write; and if they helped each other in spelling out the Bible, they were in no danger of thirty-nine lashes . . . . (184)

Jacobs does not take into account here the conditions of servants in the nineteenth century, which were in many cases worse than those of even factory workers or agricultural laborers in terms of work hours and surveillance and abuse by overseers.

As Elizabeth Langland notes, servants "worked gruelling days, (often from 5 or 6 A.M. until 10 or 11 P.M.)" (16), and many dealt with the physical violence and brutality of their masters and mistresses, under whose supervision they were constantly subjected, "'bound to give up their *whole* time to them'" (14). However, despite these conditions, Jacobs is correct in her assessment that slaves suffered even worse conditions; they were the actual property of their masters and mistresses and as such were more likely to be worked for twenty-four-hour stretches or murdered at the whim of their owners. And while Harriet Jacobs and Harriet Wilson wrote under penalty of death, someone like the Victorian maidservant Elizabeth Mary Parker, who wrote a novel, had to fear that her employers' anger upon

discovering her writing would lead to dismissal, not death.[20] Given the existence, then, of writers like Jacobs and Wilson--and even Parker, for that matter (she was *supposedly* the only Victorian maidservant to have written a novel for the circulating libraries)--why is there such skepticism among literary critics of the possibility that similar writers existed? Because we've had "close on ten years now" (Woolf, *Room* 116) of research in this area and surely should have discovered them all *by now*?

Part of what has perpetuated the exclusion of working-class Victorian writers from the canon, and women writers even more so, has been the use of a critical discourse that equates the term "working class" with subject matter and political views and not necessarily with class background or identity. If we turn to two important studies of "working-class" Victorian literature--P. J. Keating's *The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction* and Paul Thomas Murphy's *Toward a Working-Class Canon: Literary Criticism in British Working-Class Periodicals, 1816-1848*--we see such problematic discourse. Given my working-class background and how rarely I had encountered discussion of working-class writers in literary scholarship, when I first came across these works I was both relieved and elated; finally, I saw terms that I had rarely come across before, words like

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[20] In Chapter Five I examine Arthur Munby's diary entries on Parker, which demonstrate her fear of being discovered by her employers.

"working-class fiction," "working-class novelist," "working-class periodical," and "working-class journalist." But my disillusionment was swift and painful. By "working-class fiction" and "working-class novelist," Keating was "refer[ing] solely to subject matter, . . . either fiction about, or a novelist writing about, the working classes" (xi); few, if any, of his "working-class novelists" were truly of the working class. And Murphy makes the same discursive move, although at least in his case *some* of the periodicals and the journalists were working class. With disappointment, I read his explanation:

> [f]or the purposes of this study . . . I define a working-class periodical as a periodical that is self-consciously *directed toward the working class* and that clearly *reflects working-class interests*; I define working-class journalist as one who self-consciously promotes those class interests. Hundreds of periodicals and writers fit within the limits of these definitions. (31, emphasis mine)

But, I mumbled, not hundreds of *working-class* periodicals and writers. For all the "direct[ing] toward" and "reflect[ing]" and "promot[ing]" of the working classes, here, there seemed very little of the working classes themselves as the ones actually doing the directing, reflecting, or promoting of their own interests.

Before I am condemned here as too "rough," too angry, too out-of-line in my response to Murphy's and Keating's use of discourse, I ask feminist women of the middle and upper classes to consider the following analogy: think of how feminist critics would react if, given the virtual

nonexistence of women in the Victorian literary canon, they came across two texts that defined "women's fiction" and "women's periodicals" as those concerned with women, but then found out that these texts were actually written by *men*. Or imagine the even more absurd situation of encountering the terms "woman writer" and "woman journalist," only to find that they mean those writers, mostly, if not all, *men*, who were either connected to "women" through their subject matter or through their feminist politics. "She wrote it, but 'she' was not a 'she'"--but 'he' gets to be a 'she' simply by focusing on 'her' as a subject or calling 'himself' a feminist.

Imagine another scenario: the term "African-American writer" meaning anyone, including a white person, who writes about African Americans. Would Harriet Beecher Stowe, if judged by a white literary critic to be "supportive" of blacks, be deemed an "African-American writer"? The intense racism here, as well as the sexism of my gender examples, seems glaringly obvious. What happens, then, when "working class" is used in the discourse I cite above? Is that discourse somehow unproblematic because class is usually less materially apparent than gender or race? Or is that discourse another form that functions, albeit inadvertently, to de-materialize class and thus to de-materialize working-class experience. Are we not dealing with another

permutation of Russ's "ways to suppress women's writing": "*They wrote it, but 'they' were not 'they'*"?

But fortunately, "they" *were* "they"--working class--and "they" *did* write "it"--literature, both noncanonical and canonical forms. In fact, Keating and Murphy's discourse aside, the poetry and fiction of male *working-class* Victorian writers have gained *some* recognition from literary critics. That "recognition" is often not very positive, however, in terms of "aesthetic judgment" or in terms of concession that a working-class literary tradition even existed during the Victorian Period, as Keating's explanation demonstrates:

> [i]n so far as it is possible to talk at all of a genuine working-class literary tradition, it is to be found in certain regional poets (both dialect and non-dialect), in a considerable mass of Chartist verse and doggerel, and most interestingly in the memoirs of working men who rose to positions of eminence in public life. Apart from a few Chartist novels imaginative prose is non-existent. (3)

Given the references here to "Chartists" and "working men," the *gender* of those few working-class authors included in this tenuous "working-class literary tradition" is clear. Vicinus also argues that "[w]orking-class fiction is rare in nineteenth-century English literature," but she adds that "*serious criticism of it* is even rarer" ("Chartist" 7, emphasis mine).[21]

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[21] It is important to note that Vicinus makes this point in an article that focuses exclusively on working-class Victorian fiction written by Chartists.

If we turn to literary critics who do not agree with Keating's assessment of the virtually "non-existent" "imaginative prose," gender once again becomes significant. Murphy, for example, cites numerous "working-class poets" and many "working-class writers" of short fiction (ones he distinguishes as coming from working-class backgrounds versus those to whom he applies the label but who do not come from such backgrounds); however, these are usually Chartists, and they are decidedly *male*. The word "women" appears in his table of contents only once and without reference to women authors: his category reads, "women, *as audience*" (211, emphasis mine). And if we look to a study of non-Chartist working-class fiction writers of the late Victorian Period--Paul Salveson's "Allen Clarke and the Lancashire School of Working-class Novelists"--once again we find only *male* working-class novelists cited. Salveson's work proves, however, that "there did in fact exist . . . a cohesive group of working-class novelists in the years between 1890 and 1914, and that they possessed a mass readership" (172), thus demonstrating that the Chartists were not the *only* working-class fiction writers of the Victorian Period. Salveson's study, like Murphy's, however, focuses only on literature by labor activist working-class *men*.

As the following assertion from Keating points out, such studies are not even typical of literary and historical

scholarship on what is considered "working-class fiction": "[t]he industrial novel of the 1840s and 50s is the only type of English working-class fiction to have received much attention from literary and social historians" (6-7). (Remember, by "working-class fiction" here Keating does *not* mean that which was written by members of the working class.) Keating does broaden the typical literary analysis, however, by focusing on fiction about the urban working class.[22] As he notes, "there were far more novels written during the Victorian period which deal with the urban rather than the industrial working class" (6), and yet "the novel of non-industrial working class life has been totally ignored" (7). He explains that the "interest in industrialism as a subject for fiction [about the working class] was closely related to the rise and fall of Chartism" (7). Interestingly, then, we see the emphasis upon Chartism both within the traditional Victorian literary canon--in terms of fiction it appears with the industrial novel--and within the small forays made into that canon by critics emphasizing the literature of working-class authors.

Part of the reason that "working-class fiction" came to mean primarily the industrial novel written by middle-class

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[22] It is important to note, however, that Keating, in his own words, "omit[s] entirely fiction about agricultural workers and (allowing for one or two special cases) domestic servants" (xii). These workers, however, were part of the *important heterogeneity* of the working classes during the Victorian period; thus, his omission is highly problematic.

writers such as Elizabeth Gaskell and that "working-class literature" came to mean the work of predominantly male Chartists has to do with historians' constructions of the working classes. John Benson argues that until fairly recently, a stereotype existed--a gender-specific, occupation-specific stereotype--of what constituted the working class during the Victorian Period: the male industrial worker, specifically one who was involved in trade unionism or other collective labor activism. As Benson points out, "labour historians [have not] done enough to counteract the preoccupation of economic and business historians with successful, capital-intensive, heavy industries such as coal-mining and iron-making" (*Penny* 3).

Benson considers this "preoccupation" "unfortunate" because it "has encouraged labour historians to concentrate upon organized, collective (particularly trade union) efforts at working-class self-improvement" (3), and, as he explains, such "trade union histories, whatever their merits, cannot be expected to explore fully the non-institutional features of working-class life" (3). In his recent book *The Working Class in Britain, 1850-1839,* he notes that "the new historiography"--which "point[s] to signs of an increasingly uniform [and industrialized] working experience" during the nineteenth century--is highly problematic because one can "easily be seduced . . . into overlooking the persistent *heterogeneity* that lay at the

center of working people's experiences of work" (32, emphasis mine); "it is necessary," he argues, "to look beyond the struggles of the relatively few workers employed in mining, manufacturing and other heavy industries," and to focus as well upon "the lives of the great mass of men, women and children engaged--whether full-time, part-time or on a casual basis--in farming, building, transport, domestic service and retailing, or in begging, crime and penny capitalism" (32).

The very occupations Benson refers to are ones that a number of historians have focused upon recently to demonstrate the complexity of class that existed during the nineteenth century. They show that class is actually a *continuum* and not "a linear progression," as Richard Price notes it is "commonly misconceived" to be (50). Many of these historians build upon the groundbreaking work of E. P. Thompson, who, countering what he calls an "error" in "much latter-day 'Marxist' writing" (10), argues that the working class was not a "thing," something that "r[o]se like the sun at an appointed time" (9)--the onset of industrialization--and thus "ha[d] a real existence, which can be defined almost mathematically--so many men who stand in a certain relation to the means of production" (10). Rather, he defines class as

> an historical phenomenon, unifying a number of disparate and seemingly unconnected events, both in the raw material of experience and in consciousness. I emphasize that it is an

> historical phenomenon. I do not see class as a 'structure', nor even a 'category', but as something which in fact happens (and can be shown to have happened) in human relationships. (9)

Thus, he argues, the working class "was present at its own making" (9). "[T]here was," he explains, "a consciousness of the identity of interests between working men of the most *diverse* occupations and levels of attainment, which was embodied in many institutional forms, and which was expressed on an unprecedented scale in the general unionism of 1830-4" (807, emphasis mine), and "[o]n the other hand, there was a consciousness of identity of the interests of the working class, or 'productive classes', *as against* those of other classes" (807). He demonstrates, then, that "class is a *relationship*, and not a thing" (11, emphasis mine). Many historians have examined the *diversity* of occupations Thompson acknowledges--thus breaking away from the stereotype of the industrial proletariat--in order to show the dynamic qualities of this relationship that is "class."

Gareth Stedman Jones looks at these dynamic qualities by arguing that "class" is a word, and as such, it is "embedded in language"; he points to the need to examine the linguistic construction of class in order to view it as a relationship. Class is not, he contends, a fixed concept grounded in "a single reference point in anterior social reality"; rather,

> there are different languages of class, [and thus] one should not proceed upon the assumption that 'class' as an elementary counter of official social description, 'class' as an effect of theoretical discourse about distribution or productive relations, 'class' as the summary of a cluster of culturally signifying practices or 'class' as a species of political or ideological self-definition, [all] share [such a] single reference point. (7-8)

Cora Kaplan complicates Stedman Jone's model of class by looking at how class is *experienced* by class subjects. While class is indeed about the "conflicting and competing discourses" that Stedman Jones points to, it is also, she argues, something that "is lived . . . as if it *were* a set of coherent social relations," and thus it is "'made' and 'lived' in both conscious and unconscious registers through a variety of languages and practices at any given point in history" (164, emphasis mine). She explains that there is a slippage between what one *thinks* he or she is doing--enacting a set of coherent social relations"--and what one is "actually doing"--enacting a *non*coherent "variety of languages and practices," ones that "oscillate between moments of relative coherence . . . and moments when new formulations--often tentative and transitory--are being realized" (164). Kaplan thus supports Thompson's point that "class is a relationship" and highlights the ways in which that "relationship" is extremely fluid and dynamic.

Examining these qualities of "class" is important if one is to steer away from a tendency to construct "class" as consisting of three rigid categories--upper class (or

"aristocracy" and "capitalist class"), middle class (or "petit bourgeois" and "bourgeois"), and working class (or "proletariat), the latter terms being used more frequently by Marxist and neo-Marxist historians and sociologists. As R. S. Neale notes, "[t]he boundaries of the classes, particularly of the two lower ones, are rarely clearly or explicitly explained" by scholars,

> and there is little general agreement among writers about the bases of classification. Nevertheless this [three-class] model and these categories are regularly used in analyzing the interplay of economic, social, political, and cultural forces. (144)

It is important, then to look at the work of scholars who *have* attempted to explain these "boundaries" more "explicitly" and to complicate simplistic constructions of class--historians like Edward Higgs, for example.

Higgs questions the long-held practice in Victorian historical scholarship of using the keeping or not keeping of servants as a criterion for the dividing line between the working classes and middle and upper classes. Higgs points out that "a neat identification of servant employment and the middle classes is too simplistic" (133). In his study of servant employers in mid-nineteenth-century Rochdale, for instance, he found that many middle-class families did not employ even one servant, whereas many working-class families did. These working-class families--and Higgs specifically identifies a variety of manual laborers, such as factory operatives, joiners, weavers, and miners (133)--often

obtained servants from the workhouses: girls who were willing to work without wages in return for room and board (133).[23] He also notes that the census often considered *any* woman who worked in the home--even unpaid relatives--to be employed domestic servants, thus further complicating any simple connection between the employment of servants and class status.

Other historians' research similarly complicates long-held beliefs about class distinctions. For example, Royden Harrison calls into question Eric Hobsbawm's "'gulf,' his contention concerning the sharply drawn frontier between aristocrats and plebians" of labour (3) because "no such gulf emerged in any of the trades or callings" that he and his colleagues examine in their book, *Divisions of Labour: Skilled Workers and Technological Change in Nineteenth-Century England*. They analyze trades such as cabinet-making and baking[24] in a way that problematizes distinguishing certain tradesmen as "petit bourgeois" and thus middle class. For example, cabinet-makers are often segregated into two camps--"between the men producing to order with

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[23] Joan Perkin also cites another specific example: in the cotton districts and the North Staffordshire potteries about 30 percent of married women held positions in the factories; thus, they needed to hire domestic servants to do household chores, usually "young girl[s] of age 7 to 11" (138).

[24] See Chapter Five for my analysis of Isabella Fyvie Mayo's father--a London baker--whose class position was one that complicates simplistic class distinctions between the working and middle classes.

expensive imported materials and the unfortunate wretches working at the other end of the trade, enslaved to the sweater or master of a 'slaughter house'" (4); ignored by historians, however, is the vast "intermediate group trying to make its way despite the pretensions of the 'exclusives' on the one side and the victims of unregulated competition on the other" (4), an "intermediate group" found in other trades as well, like boot and shoe making or tailoring. As Harrison points out, "while labour aristocracy has been considered with respect to its economic anatomy, its cultural formation, its political role, and its presence in local communities, it has been totally neglected in its occupational dimensions" (3). It is when such neglect of one aspect of class subjectivity occurs that simplistic notions of class result.

John Benson points out a similar area of neglect with the "penny capitalists": "[f]or economic, business, and labour historians alike penny capitalism has remained on the margins: at best unimportant, at worst unknown" (3). One of the characteristics he lists of the "penny capitalist" is that "he should come from the working class" (5), and thus he distinguishes these small tradesmen from the "petit bourgeois." In fact, he argues that many "[s]killed workers like watchmakers, joiners, tailors, and cobblers commonly took orders and did repairs for their friends and neighbors. . . . The boot and shoe industry too remained a fruitful

field for part-time, even full-time enterprise" (44).[25] Benson makes it clear, however, that penny capitalism did not ensure entrance into the bourgeois or even petit bourgeois middle classes: "Even the profits made by apparently full-time penny capitalists rarely resulted in economic security, let alone in any upward social mobility" (48); he points out that on the contrary, "the entry of workers into independent production was as likely to represent downward mobility as it was a move up the economic or social scale" (49).

The complexities of class subjectivity presented only recently by historians like Benson and Harrison were not uncommon among Victorians writing on class. These "scholars" of class found little need to create rigid, homogenized class distinctions. Lloyd Jones and J. M. Ludlow's *Progress of the Working Class, 1832-1867*, published in 1867, offers a definition of the working class that includes both artisans and manual laborers (7, 18), and the book discusses as belonging to the working classes in general institutions like "Friendly Societies" (45) and "Adult Sunday Schools" (167),[26] which many historians today

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[25] One of the Victorian authors that I identify as working class--Marianne Farningham--was put to work by her father doing "shoe binding" (50) part-time.

[26] These institutions figure prominently in Marianne Farningham's novel *The Cathedral's Shadow* as agents for collective, positive change for the working classes. See my discussion in Chapter Five.

attribute to the embourgeoisement of the "respectable" working class. And the 1873 book, *Our New Masters*, by Thomas Wright (the "journeyman engineer") describes the heterogeneity of the working classes, which he says "are not a single-acting, single-idea'd body. They are [instead] practically and plurally *classes* . . . ." (2-3). While he describes these "classes" as having differences of "respectability" and "roughness," he notes a plurality of types among them. He says, for example, that

> [t]here is an educated and really intelligent section, and an uneducated and ignorant section; a political section [broken up again into several sub-sections], and a non-political section; a trade-unionist and a non-trade-unionist section; a sober, steady, saving section, and a drunken, unsteady, thriftless section" (5)

These "sections" themselves are dispersed, albeit unequally, throughout three "schools" of the working classes, the first of which is "the old school--the school in which the largest percentage of the lack of education, prejudice, and feeling of class-antagonism . . . is to be found" (15). He explains that the "man" of this "school" is "pleased to regard himself as 'rough and tough'" (16), but that this man also has "good qualities" as well (16). The other two schools--"the school of the day" (18) and "the 'coming' or rising school" (21)--are, he contends, more "respectable," but he lists attributes of all three schools that indicate that none falls neatly into the "respectable"/"rough" dichotomy presented by historians like Perkin. Victorians like Jones,

Ludlow, and Wright tend to present the working class as existing along a class continuum, one that is complex and fluid--one that can, and does, change over time. Their constructions of class seem more astute than those of many recent historians, for, after all, people have fluid class "subjectivities," not fixed class "identities."

I prefer the term class "subjectivity" versus "identity" because, as Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren point out, "identity" implies a subject that is unitary and fixed, whereas "subjectivity" acknowledges the role of self-understanding--the way "individuals make sense of their experiences" as well as the role of cultural forms which constrain or enable such understandings (14). "Subjectivity" also addresses the heterogeneity of identity, and "the fact that individuals consist of a decentered flux of subject positions" that are dependent upon "discourse, social structure, repetition, memory, and affective investment" (14-15). Thus, I follow Reginia Gagnier's definition of "subjectivity," which incorporates the common Cartesian sense of subjectivity, what she calls a "bourgeois" form--"being a significant agent worthy of the regard of others, a human subject, as well as an individuated 'ego' for oneself" (141)--with a broader range of senses informed by current cultural and social theory[27]:

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[27] Gagnier utilizes the theories of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu in particular.

firstly, that the subject is "a subject to itself, an 'I'" as well as "a subject to, and of, others"; that "the subject is also a subject of knowledge," in particular the discourses of social institutions; and that "the subject is a body that is separate (except in the case of pregnant women) from other human bodies," yet is "dependent upon its physical environment," and "the subject is subject to language, or intersubjectivity (i.e., culture)" (8-9).

Gagnier argues that "[a]s represented by the [literary] canon, bourgeois subjectivity and literary value both consist of belief in creativity, autonomy, and individual freedom; self-reflection as problem-solving, especially in writing; and a progressive narrative of self, especially in relation to family and material well-being" (169). She examines a vast number of working-class autobiographies, far more by women than the autobiographies of the working-class studied by other scholars, and she contends that these autobiographers either resisted such notions of "bourgeois" subjectivity and instead created other forms, or accepted them and thus represented themselves as "weak subjects," or "wavered between the two extremes in confusion" (148).

Gagnier does not, however, examine ways in which the "working-class" forms of subjectivity she identifies--a collective sense of self versus an individualistic one[28]

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[28] Raymond Williams, arguing along similar lines, says that the "crucial distinction" between the "bourgeois" and the "working class" occurs in their "alternative ideas of

--might critique, indeed deconstruct, Cartesian, bourgeois subjectivity. She does not allow for working-class subjects to believe in creativity, autonomy, self-reflexive writing as problem-solving, etc.--all of which seem to uphold values typically associated with middle-class "respectability"--but to do so in a way that does not simply reinscribe bourgeois values. (In this respect, she seems similar to those historians who fail to allow the possibility of a "respectable" working-class culture that is not merely a product of embourgeoisement.) She does not, for example, consider that working-class subjects could utilize these so-called "bourgeois" methods to enact Raymond Williams' "idea of the working class," wherein the point is "[n]ot [that] the individual, but [that] the whole society, will move" (*Culture* 326) through such efforts.[29]

Because subjectivity involves the subject as both subject to knowledge, such as cultural values, and as a subject that is a body subject to the physical environment, separating values and material conditions when analyzing

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the nature of social relationship" (*Culture* 325), the "bourgeois" idea being "that version of social relationship which we usually call individualism" (325) and the "working class" idea as that which, commonly called "communism, socialism or cooperation, regards society neither as neutral nor as protective, but as the positive means for all kinds of development," these being "not individually but collectively interpreted" (325-26).

[29] See my discussion in Chapter Five of Marianne Farningham's novel *The Cathedral's Shadow*, a novel whose plot structure ensures a collective, progressive movement whereby all members of society improve their circumstances.

working-class subjectivity fails to take into account the ways in which these are relational. And this relationality demonstrates the complexity involved with class subjectivity, a complexity that too many historians and literary critics often overlook. Richard Price contends that

> [c]ategories of analysis such as class consciousness and subordination, co-operation and conflict, hegemony and independence are not only all useful and complementary categories of analysis, but they are also historically determined and not universal abstractions. The tendency of historiography has been to place them either in opposition to each other or treat them as something external to history itself. But in fact it is the presence of differing qualities and types of 'subordination' and 'resistance', of 'class consciousness' and 'class co-operation', of 'hegemenal influences' and 'independence', that composes the character of the wider structure of social relations. And it is the tension and friction within these formations that provides them with their dynamic quality, so that rather than being fixed, immutable expressions of equilibrium, they are in an almost constant state of movement and renegotiation. (11)

Just such a complex form of subjectivity--one that is informed by a fluid, dynamic multiplicity of class identity --is the form I find most useful, perhaps because of how I consider myself as a subject--perhaps not completely "working class," but hardly "bourgeois," and certainly *not* merely wavering "in confusion" between two rigid "extremes."

Pierre Bourdieu's theory on the various forms of capital is applicable here and can help explain how one's subjectivity might contain both "bourgeois" and "working class" aspects. In *Language and Symbolic Power*, Bourdieu

defines the various fields where agents in the social space are positioned, explaining that

> [t]hese are, principally, economic capital (in its different kinds), cultural capital, and social capital, as well as symbolic capital, commonly called prestige, reputation, fame, etc. which is the form assumed by these different kinds of capital whey they are perceived and recognized as legitimate. (230)

Thus, if I examine my own subjectivity as a highly educated woman from a poverty background, I have very little "economic capital"--no real cash to speak of, very few material possessions that I could liquidate for cash, etc.--yet I have a great deal of "cultural capital" in the form of higher education--graduate degrees, as well as the ability to speak an educated, "bourgeois" discourse, etc.--which in turn provides me with some "social capital," "capital" I can use to move successfully in "bourgeois" circles; however, I lack "cultural capital" in that I still have characteristically "working class" mannerisms, I do not know certain "bourgeois" rules of etiquette and social interaction, and I can, especially in moments of emotional distress, slip into "working-class" dialect ("I ain't gonna take this crap no mo'"), thus losing rather quickly the "symbolic capital" I gained from my "cultural" and "social capital." In short, my symbolic capital derives from the "respectability" my behavior, speech and mannerisms command, whereas my "working-class" cultural capital has no symbolic capital--it is "rough," unacceptable, illegitimate--and it

correlates to a presentation of self as a "low," "grotesque body," to use Bakhtinian terms, versus a "respectable," bourgeois, "classical body."[30]

I offer the example of my own class subjectivity to demonstrate the complexity involved in issues of both class and subjectivity. To look at "class" as simply a matter of either one's occupation, or one's education, or one's economic capital alone is not enough; the multiplicity of factors involved must be taken into account. Unfortunately, rigid, simplistic definitions of the three standard class positionings--working, middle, and upper--have, until recently, taken precedence in most academic discourse, whether we look at the Victorian Period or late twentieth-century Great Britain or the United States. "Both the construction of class as a "linear progression" and the "three-class model of social structure" (Neale 143) tend to rigidify class and classes into a "thing," albeit one broken down into three separate "things." But class is, after all, a *lived relationship*. Thus, the work of scholars dedicated to more complex formulations is especially important because it reads against the grain of these long-entrenched constructions of class.

There is much that we can learn from "history," then, and from constructions of the working class that emphasize

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[30] See my discussion in Chapter Two of these two "bodies" and their class distinctiveness.

such complexity and fluidity. As David Smith contends, "[st]ructurally, the proletariat today is basically the same as the proletariat of a hundred years ago. Capitalism remains capitalism. We are not living in a classless society" (176). I think that it is equally essential, however, to note the ways in which certain normalizing and homogenizing constructions of class--those pervading a society through discourses of the media, for example, or of the academy, such as literary, historical, and sociological discourses--can fix subjects into particular class positions. This "fixing" might translate into keeping people locked into their imagined or "real" class positionings by attributing privilege and access to these groups that they do not really have, thus blaming them for their own "failure" to move higher up the class ladder. For example, the current blue collar/white collar distinction of class pervasive in U.S. sociological discourse has damaging consequences because it portrays all white collar workers as "middle class." However, just as certain "labour aristocracy" occupations of the nineteenth century were not truly "petit bourgeois," or middle class, certain white-collar positions, many of which are held by women, are hardly middle class either.

In his categorization of the white collar "middle class," the sociologist Leonard Beeghley includes female "salespersons" and "administrative support" workers who

make, on average, $5,500 to $11,600 annually. He demonstrates that men in similar positions earn from $17,700 to $21,100. These are the lowest paying white-collar positions listed; however, the highest paying--"executives and managers"--demonstrate similar gender-differentiated pay scales. The women earn $19,100 to the men's $32,000. Certainly, the latter two groups would fall into the "middle class," as would the male salespersons and administrative support workers, but the female ones--with their earnings between $5,500 and $11,600--can hardly be considered "middle class," at least not in terms of their economic capital. They need a certain "bourgeois" social capital to acquire the job in the first place; however, what they "purchase" with that social capital is not very much economically in this instance. In fact, the lower figure places a woman at or below the poverty level, even if she has no dependents, and if she does, she would probably be poverty level even with the higher salary.

Despite the "labour aristocracy" position of "white collar," then, these women are still earning very low "working-class" salaries. And as Michael Apple points out, such low salaries are a growing trend among women white-collar workers, a trend that does not demonstrate women's higher class position overall because of their likelihood of working white-collar jobs. Apple notes that in the United States,

> over 90 per cent of women's (paid) work falls into four basic categories: (1) employment in 'peripheral' manufacturing industries and retail trades, and particularly in the expanding but low-paid service sector of the economy; (2) clerical work; (3) health and education; and (4) domestic service. Most women in, say, the United States and the United Kingdom are concentrated in either the lowest-paid positions in these areas or at the bottom of the middle pay grades when there has been some mobility. (54)

Apple argues that in every job category cited above, "*women* are more apt to be proletarianized than men" (54). Perhaps these white-collar women's working conditions are better than, say, those of women working in a factory, but their income is so low that they can hardly purchase much of the educational or cultural capital of the middle class.[31] Similarly, there were women of the Victorian period--the writer Isabella Fyvie Mayo, a clerical worker, is a perfect example--who were perhaps "petit bourgeois" in name, but "working class" in terms of their material "reality."[32]

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[31] And the trend among such low-paid clerical and sales positions is increasingly "feminized," as is poverty. Richard Sobel points out that "[w]omen continue to move into the low level clerical jobs that are 80.1 percent female" and "[s]imilar patterns occur by race, where blacks, particularly women, tend to fill" these lower level white-collar positions (51). He concludes that "the popular and social images of white collar as middle class are not sustained by . . . theoretical analysis"; in short, "the vast majority of white collar labor [which is female] is working class" (36). See also Rosemary Crompton and Gareth Jones' *White-collar Proletariat: Deskilling and Gender in Clerical Work*.

[32] See my discussion of Mayo in Chapter Five, in which I offer descriptions from her autobiography that demonstrate the material poverty she lived in despite holding "white collar" secretarial jobs.

This writer has received virtually no attention from literary critics, however, perhaps because she does not quite fit into that category--the "middle-class woman"--who "began to write" in the nineteenth century.

When constructing or reconstructing the literary canon, then, we ought to take the materiality of class subjectivity into account, as well as class in all of its complexity. The construction of class as rigidly blue collar/white collar, working class/middle class, or as a "linear progression" or a "three-class" social structure (Neale 143), tends to rigidify class and classes into a "thing," or "things," rather than the dynamic "relationship" that Thompson argues demonstrates that it is. The literary critic in search of working-class Victorian writers or of a heterogeneity of middle-class women writers is confronting these same rigid constructions of class when s/he finds only the male Chartist or socialist author representing the "working-class writer" or the solidly middle- or upper middle-class woman exemplifying the "middle-class woman writer." If we follow the lead of certain historians, however, in viewing class as a *continuum*, we can find a number of even working-class *women* fiction writers, as well as some women writers who were lower middle class or within the fluid spaces joining working and lower middle class. These writers and their situatedness along a class continuum have, for the most part, not received enough consideration

from feminist literary critics, and the time has come to give them such consideration, especially if we are to consider the Victorian literary canon in all its "diversity."

Indeed, in reconstructing the Victorian literary canon, feminists have tended to focus upon only those women writers who were rather clearly middle class--the Brontë sisters, George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell, as well as more minor figures. Other women writers whose class backgrounds were not solidly "middle," however, have been largely ignored: authors such as Margaret Oliphant, from a lower middle-class Scottish family (the daughter of a clerk); Isabella Fyvie Mayo (the daughter of a London baker) and Hesba Stretton (the daughter of a printer)--both from families who fell in that fluid space between working class and lower middle class--; as well as "working-class" writers like Marianne Farningham (a teacher who was the daughter of a postal worker--her autobiography is included in Burnett et. al's *The Autobiography of the Working Class*); Elizabeth Mary Parker (a maidservant who was the daughter of an innkeeper); and Mary Linskill (a milliner's apprentice, later a teacher and governess, who was the daughter of a man who worked as a watchmaker, a constable, and a bailiff). Without an examination of the fluidity and complexity of class, however--without viewing class as a *continuum*--it would be easy to deny that the latter writers are even "working

class" or that the former have a class "subjectivity" worth discussing or examining in relation to their literary texts. And if we fail to take these writers' class subjectivities into account, we might judge their literature as not worthy of our notice. In short, we might suppress these women's writings through imposing our own class-biased "canons of respectability."

CHAPTER 4
"PIOUS BUT MISGUIDED EFFORTS": THE RECONSTRUCTION OF MARGARET OLIPHANT'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY, "THE ERECTION OF A DESOLATE VICTORIAN FOLLY"

> The pious but misguided efforts made to rearrange [Oliphant's] fractured narrative . . . resulted . . . in the erection of a desolate Victorian folly. Shorn of its more incisive pieces and deprived of its more personal passages the edifice swiftly achieved the status of a period piece. (Jay xv)

> The Oliphant legend is, in a sense, the self-creation of Margaret Oliphant, the self she creates in her autobiography. (Langbauer vii)

In a letter written shortly after Margaret Oliphant's death in June of 1897, Anne Thackeray Ritchie described her life-long friend as "one of those people who *make* life--so many un-make it" (Williams 184). Yet what remains of Margaret Oliphant is more "legend" than "life," a legend created, at least in part, by her autobiography.[1] The first version, *The Autobiography and Letters of Mrs. M. O. W. Oliphant*, published in 1899, was arranged and edited

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[1] When I distinguish between the "legend" and the "life" of Oliphant, I do not mean to imply that there is some essential truth that equals Oliphant's "life," a truth which is unproblematically and authentically present in her autobiography. Both "legend" and "life" are constructs, just as both biography and autobiography are constructions of subjectivity. However, focus upon certain "facts" about a person can produce a very different narrative of "life"--a narrative which, through omission, distortion, and recontextualization of certain "facts" might be termed a "legend."

primarily by Oliphant's cousin Annie Coghill. This text, which Elisabeth Jay argues "resulted . . . in the erection of a desolate Victorian folly" (xv), did much to make the legend that would, in effect, "un-make" Margaret Oliphant.

In her time, Oliphant was extremely well-known and popular. Born in 1828, into a lower middle-class Scottish family, she received little if any formal education, yet by age twenty-one she was a published novelist with a large readership (Williams 9). Her life spanned almost the entire Victorian period, and during her more than fifty-year writing career--from 1845 to 1897--she produced nearly one hundred novels, several hundred articles, and numerous short stories, biographies, histories and travel books. She was the friend and favorite novelist of Queen Victoria,[2] and Gladstone and Charles Darwin were said to be "regular readers" of her work (Williams 145).

After her death, however, Oliphant quickly dropped into obscurity; her reputation barely outlived the nineteenth century. Her autobiography, which went through three printings the year of its publication, soon went out of

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[2] Vineta and Robert A. Colby make this claim in the introduction to their 1966 biography of Oliphant (xiii). In 1868, Oliphant reviewed the Queen's Highland Journal in *Blackwood's*, and shortly thereafter was summoned to meet the Queen, who granted her a Civil List Pension of £100 a year (Williams 90-92). The Colbys state that in her later years Oliphant "was not only Queen Victoria's neighbor in Windsor but also her friend"; the Queen insisted that there be a complete series of her works placed in the Royal Library (237).

print.[3] The vast bulk of her novels have never been reprinted,[4] most "practically disappearing even from the second-hand bookshops" (Williams 187). She is known today almost solely through the legend that survived: the legend of a hack writer who wrote so much that she actually wore a hole in her right forefinger with her pen; a woman who, as Virginia Woolf so bluntly puts it in *Three Guineas*, "sold her brain, her very admirable brain, prostituted her culture and enslaved her intellectual liberty in order that she might earn her living and educate her children" (91-2); a woman who chose, without regret, to place her children over her art, motherhood over literary reputation, "womanly" duty over the fulfillment of artistic genius.[5]

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[3] It was not reprinted again until 1974, when it was published with an introduction by Q. D. Leavis. It once more went out of print, however, until the 1988 and 1990 versions, which have introductions by Laurie Langbauer and Elisabeth Jay respectively.

[4] Only a few of her novels have been reprinted recently: *Miss Marjoribanks* in 1969, *Hester* and *Kirsteen* in 1984, *The Doctor's Family and Other Stories* in 1986, and the rest of the Chronicles of Carlingford novels--*Salem Chapel* in 1986, *The Perpetual Curate* in 1987, *Miss Marjoribanks* again in 1988, and *Phoebe Junior* in 1989. Unfortunately, most of these have already gone out of print once more.

[5] This is the view of Oliphant's first biographers, the Colbys, who did much to perpetuate the legend. Their assessment of Oliphant was quite typical among critics': "The price that Mrs. Oliphant paid for her *choice* [to provide for her family] was hackmanship. She never had taken her writing very seriously. It came easily to her, and after a while she grew to look upon her talent with a faint contempt (122, emphasis mine).

But is the legend, as Laurie Langbauer claims in her foreword to the 1988 reprint of the autobiography, really "the self-creation of Margaret Oliphant, the self she creates in her autobiography" (vii)? Is the autobiography just "the cautionary tale of a gifted writer who sold herself cheap, wasting her talents through her very industry" (Langbauer v)? Certain passages from the text *would* make us think so, and the handful of critics who even interest themselves in Oliphant repeatedly point to these same passages as evidence of Oliphant's role in her own self-construction and subsequent *de*struction. After all, Oliphant explains early on in the published version of the autobiography:[6] "I have written because it gave me pleasure, because it came natural to me, because it was like talking or breathing, besides the big fact that it was necessary for me to work for my children" (4). "I might have done better work" (6), she claims, but "I have always had to think of other people" (6). "How I have been handicapped in life! Should I have done better if I had been kept, like [George Eliot], in a mental greenhouse and taken care of?" (5), she asks, then reveals the answer, that it doesn't matter, for she has made her choice: ". . . I said to myself, having then perhaps a little stirring of ambition, that I must make

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[6] Unless otherwise noted, I will be using the most recent edition of the autobiography--Langbauer's 1988 edition--for all citations from the published version of the autobiography.

up my mind to think no more of that, and that to bring up the boys for the service of God was better than to write a fine novel" (6). Thus, "No one even will mention me in the same breath with George Eliot. And that is just" (7), she concludes.

She seems to deprecate herself throughout the autobiography: "I am in very little danger of having my life written, and that is all the better in this point of view--for what could be said of me? George Eliot and George Sand make me half inclined to cry over my poor little unappreciated self" (8), she states early on. Mid-way through she says of her "working power and [her] own conception of it" (67): "how little possessed I am with any thought of it all,--how little credit I feel due to me, how accidental most things have been. . . . I wonder if God were to try me with the loss of this gift, such as it is, whether I should feel it much?" (67). And towards the end she explains, "At my most ambitious of times I would rather my children had remembered me as their mother than in any other way, and my friends as their friend. I never cared for anything else. . . . What is the reputation of a circulating library to me? Nothing, and less than nothing" (130). Given these often cited passages, who could doubt that Oliphant created her own legend, her own demise? Her autobiography appears to be exactly what Langbauer and others claim--"both a lament and apology--a lament that she

has been sold too cheap and an apology for having done the cheapening herself" (Langbauer vii).

If critics turn to Oliphant's contemporaries, they see such a judgment confirmed. As Merryn Williams explains in her 1986 biography of Oliphant, the publication of the autobiography disclosed facts about Oliphant's life that led her contemporaries to begin, out of "kindness," to perpetuate the Oliphant legend. Reading of her widowhood at a young age, how she was left £1,000 in debt[7] with three young children to raise, how she supported not only her own children but numerous relatives, including an "adopted" son and two "adopted" daughters (her nephew and nieces), as well as two brothers--one a drunk, the other an invalid--, these contemporaries concluded that she was an extremely admirable, respectable woman--a true "lady," a virtual "angel"--who sacrificed her art for her family. They seized upon the details of her life, especially her trials as a mother and breadwinner, in a manner that both apologized for her "failure" as an artist and defended her success as a mother; in doing so they perpetuated the prevailing belief that motherhood and authorship were incompatible. One critic, noting that Oliphant necessarily placed motherhood over her work, explained, "'the women who have been great

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[7] Oliphant spent the rest of her life in debt. Only nine days before her death she wrote a letter to Blackwood imploring him "to pay her bankers £100 to meet [her] expenses"; she offered Blackwood the autobiography as repayment (Williams 183).

artists [George Eliot, Charlotte Brontë] have been childless women'" (Williams 186); another wrote:

> 'To be closely related to her was to have a claim on her which overpowered every other. . . . Husband, brothers, sons, nephews, nieces, if they could not provide for themselves, it became in her eyes a duty to provide for them. . . . For them she abandoned the hope--or, as we believe, and as she believed--the certainty of being a great authoress on a level with George Eliot, and deliberately reduced herself, as she thought, to a manufacturer of saleable literature.' (Williams 186)

Oliphant's contemporaries not only seized upon the details of her life, but also upon the way she constructed her own subjectivity. In the passage above, the repetition of Oliphant's creation of self--"in her eyes"; "as she believed"; "as she thought"--underscores the critic's belief that Oliphant played a conscious part in the representation of the sacrifices she made, that she chose to present herself as having "deliberately" taken part in the reduction of her talents for the sake of her family duties. And as Elizabeth Winston points out, "Many readers of Oliphant's *Autobiography* would surely have approved her sacrifice of literary excellence to the claims of family and friends . . ." (98).

This approval of her contemporaries, however, with their "kind words--that she had a strong sense of duty, that her writing was invariably pure and womanly"--did not make Oliphant an attractive figure for the next generation (Williams 186); nor did the legend of Oliphant as a self-

sacrificing, self-effacing, "pure and womanly" writer endear her to many feminist literary critics of this generation. She certainly "did not benefit from the new wave of interest in women's writing during the 1970s" (Williams 187). Yet as Williams argues, Oliphant was actually "profoundly un-Victorian" (186), indeed quite a feminist for her time. It is thus extremely important to investigate more carefully the Oliphant legend, because the construction of Oliphant's subjectivity--what Jay calls "the erection of a desolate Victorian folly" (xv)--results from the same process of a gendered and classed "normalization" of subjectivity[8] that so often operates in the formation of the literary canon, in the structure of the academy itself, and in the very construction of social and cultural history.

In this chapter, I will demonstrate that the process that resulted in Oliphant's exclusion from the literary canon began, not so much with Oliphant's "self-creation" in her autobiography, but with her editor's[9] reconstruction of

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[8] As I explain in Chapter Two, this "normalization" occurs in cultures that set up ideal mythical norms--what Luce Irigaray refers to as an "economy of the Same"--into which all people of a particular identity category are expected to fit. Certain members of society cannot achieve such an ideal, due to class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, and other factors, and thus they are excluded and marginalized. This "normalization" process requires the three destructive forms of dealing with difference which Audre Lorde discusses--copying, ignoring, and destroying (115).

[9] Oliphant's niece and adopted "daughter" Janet Mary (Denny) Wilson (she officially changed her name to Oliphant in 1894), also edited and arranged the original text of the

the autobiography and thus of Oliphant's representation of herself. The most recent edition of Oliphant's autobiography, the 1990 version edited by Elisabeth Jay, allows us to re-visualize the complexity of Oliphant's subjectivity, and thus, through this specific example, to begin to examine and question the way representations of women's subjectivities have been constructed in the academy. Jay's edition restores for the first time the complete text in the order in which Oliphant wrote it and begins the close reading of the manuscript, which is so necessary for any thorough understanding of Oliphant's self-representation. It also lays the groundwork for a careful comparison of the manuscript to Coghill's edited version, a comparison that will make visible the heterogeneity of Oliphant's subjectivity--in particular, aspects of gender, class, and ethnicity that have been effaced by Coghill's and others' constructions--and thus allow us to deconstruct the Oliphant legend.

Coghill's reconstruction of her subject, Oliphant, as well as the perpetuation of the Oliphant legend by critics over the last one hundred years, has "normalized" Oliphant's subjectivity, forcing it to fit into a particular cultural

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autobiography--two notebooks with entries written at long intervals from 1849 to 1895. When the final edited version went to print, Coghill's name appeared as the editor. For simplicity's sake, whenever I discuss the editing process involved with the autobiography, I refer to the "editor": however, Denny's part in the process should be assumed along with Coghill's.

mythical norm--the genteel Victorian "lady" or "Angel in the House." This mythical norm included an idealization of the middle-class woman's domestic role--no other role was permitted, especially not that of worker outside of the domestic sphere--, and it made the domestic role itself more one of the "moral guidance of youth" and of "spiritual influence over the home and society" (Newton 19), than of the actual material domestic work itself; thus, "women's work in the home [was rendered] less visible than it had been before" (Newton 118), and any other type of labor, unless somehow justified as fitting into the domestic role, placed women outside of this norm of genteel respectability.

Critics of Oliphant's autobiography--even feminists such as Langbauer who ultimately find ways to read Oliphant's text as strategic and subversive--have overlooked the fact that the autobiography was heavily edited and thus have reinscribed, to a great extent, the normalization of Oliphant's subjectivity begun by Coghill. Langbauer argues, for example, that Oliphant's "insistence on maternity" in the autobiography is more than "just a sell-out"; it is, she contends, "the strategy of the (m)other, making use of the roles, images, and values available to her, but radically rewriting them . . . to record her dissatisfaction and revolt" (ix). She contends that while the text "can finally only record the sheer disposability, the planned obsolescence of the self" required by such an insistence on

maternity over authorship, the language Oliphant uses to describe the "inevitability" of such a destruction of self "gives us a way to read it that exposes the workings of the system even if it does not arrest them" (xi). Because her argument relies upon the edited version of the autobiography, however, she cannot see the ways in which Oliphant's text attempts to "arrest" the "workings of the system" by resisting the normalization that that system perpetuates; she thus effaces Oliphant's insistence upon certain aspects "of the self"--most notably class, especially the profession of authorship through which Oliphant was able to achieve upward class mobility.[10] Such class-based aspects "of the self" problematize mythical norms such as genteel, domestic maternity that result in "the sheer disposability . . . of the self."

This interpretive trend contributed to the reduction of Oliphant's role into a normative one of genteel domesticity and respectability from that of an important "woman of

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[10] Had Oliphant "chosen" the role of genteel motherhood over the profession of authorship, she most certainly would have dropped below her original class position--lower middle class when she was first married--rather than risen above it. With the success of her authorship, she actually bankrolled her husband's stain glass window business (which ended up *losing* money), and after his death she supported herself and her children. Given that she had no relatives upon which to depend (in fact, most of them depended upon *her* for financial support), she and her children, as well as her numerous dependent relatives, would have ended up in poverty had she not pursued a career as a "woman of letters." Thus, her profession and her class position were inextricably linked.

letters" who published fiction and non-fiction, "compiled literary histories, did translating, [and] was an eminent figure in intellectual society" (Leavis 160). Only Williams and Jay considered the complete manuscript before theorizing on Oliphant as subject or before interpreting her texts. Without such a consideration, normalization of Oliphant's subjectivity is certainly more likely, especially in terms of forcing Oliphant into a particular class and gender mold, for the editing process was extensive and especially class-biased. As Williams explains, Annie Coghill and Denny Oliphant cut passages of the original manuscript that were "too painful [for them] to print" (185). Together they rearranged the text, then added some of Oliphant's letters to friends and publishers. Coghill then wrote the preface and "a tearful linking narrative" (Williams 185).

That the editing process was particularly class-biased and censorious is not difficult to ascertain. For example, the selection of letters was heavily censored, as evidenced by Coghill's remark in the preface: one entire series of letters, spanning most of Oliphant's career--from 1865 to her death--was deemed "too intimate to furnish much of general interest" (xxii). And that the letters were necessary at all is perhaps even more significant: their inclusion demonstrates the extent to which Coghill tampered with the original text of the autobiography. The cutting of those "too painful" passages resulted in "a very short

manuscript" (Williams 185), and Coghill's motivation, whether conscious or not, for reducing the manuscript so extensively is evident in the discourse employed--"too painful," "too intimate." This discourse declares aspects of Oliphant's subjectivity, in particular her class position--her need to labor to support herself and her family--and the effects of that class position, too difficult to deal with, both emotionally and personally, for the editors and the readers of the text.

Oliphant, however, obviously did not find these aspects too difficult (emotionally or otherwise) to write about and offer to a reading public, nor did she wish the manuscript to be cut so extensively and thus need to be supplemented with letters or a linking narrative. In the preface, Coghill says that Oliphant expressed the belief *on her deathbed* "that it [the manuscript] would serve for all that was necessary" (xxi); her "one distinct injunction," as Coghill herself refers to it, was that "no biography of her . . . be written" (xxi). In order to reconcile the fact that she made unauthorized changes to the original manuscript with the need to "obey [Oliphant's] wishes" (xxii), Coghill *must* defend her inclusion of the letters by saying that she does it to "gratify the many readers who have for so long a stretch of years regarded [Oliphant] as a friend" (xxii). She "gratif[ies]" them, however, in a manner that presumes and protects a middle-class emotional

sensitivity to certain material--the "too painful," "too intimate" aspects of Oliphant's self-construction. Certain passages were simply too "rough" for delicate, genteel readers. Coghill thus appeals to presumed middle-class values--to sensitivity and gentility--to defend what was in actuality a "rough" butchering of Oliphant's text, a removal of those aspects of subjectivity, in particular, which aligned Oliphant with the working class versus the genteel middle class.

Coghill certainly needed to defend herself, for the result of her extensive editing and supplementation of the original manuscript was, I will demonstrate, not so much an autobiography, but rather an unauthorized biography. The excised portion of Oliphant's text was incredibly substantial: "well over a quarter of the original manuscript" (Jay ix). As Jay argues, these cuts, "the[se] pious but misguided efforts to rearrange [Oliphant's] fractured narrative" (xv), originated in Coghill's concern for creating a specific kind of "womanly image" for Oliphant (ix), that of the "respectable" genteel Victorian lady. She removed from the manuscript the "rough" gendered, classed and ethnic aspects that did not fit this "womanly image": Oliphant's "rough," extremely caustic and bitter remarks on others; her grief over the deaths of her children, especially that of her daughter; her suicidal thoughts and blasphemous upbraidings of God; important material details

concerning money and her work; certain "rough" aspects of her family life such as debt and drunkenness; her descriptions of the fights between her husband and her mother, which made her early married years "intolerable" (37); as well as references to the editing process itself. Coghill, in an effort to please her contemporaries, deleted these "rough" aspects of Oliphant's autobiography during the editing process. As Jay asserts, and a comparison of the edited and unedited versions of the autobiography will demonstrate, that process "colluded with the constraints imposed upon women and women writers by the cultural assumptions enshrined in the market" (ix). These "cultural assumptions" constitute a hidden agenda that must be rendered visible, for that agenda perpetuates classist, sexist, heterosexist, and ethnocentric attitudes that are cloaked under the cover of "respectability."

In Jay's introduction, she exposes such an agenda--the "editors' hidden agenda" (ix)--which she explains is their desire to present a respectable, "womanly image" of Margaret Oliphant. Jay points to the deletions made as well as to Coghill's preface, which appears in the other published versions of the autobiography, as setting up readers to view Oliphant as a woman who fit the ideal image of genteel, middle-class respectability imposed upon women in Victorian society. Women of Oliphant's class position--middle-class only through continual labor--, as well as working-class

women, could never of course attain this ideal of self-sacrificial domesticity, an ideal that rendered their labor --both domestic and non-domestic--invisible. However, in the preface, Coghill describes Oliphant's life in these terms--as "for her children first" (xvii) and as "noble, loving, and *womanly* in the highest sense" (xxii, emphasis mine). As Jay notes, Coghill paints the "womanly image" most explicitly, however, in the following passage, which is worth quoting at length:

> [W]hatever suffering might be lying in wait to seize upon her solitary hours, there was almost always a pleasant welcome and talk of the very best to be found in her modest drawing room. If the visitors were congenial, her charm of manner awoke, her simple fitness of speech clothed every subject with life and grace, her beautiful eyes shone (they never sparkled), and the spell of her exquisite *womanliness* made a charmed circle round her. . . . [S]he had, as a family inheritance, lovely hands, which were constantly busy, in what she called her idle time, with some dainty sewing or knitting; she had those wonderful eyes which kept their beauty to the last minute of her life; and she had a most exquisite daintiness in all her ways and in the very atmosphere about her which was 'pure *womanly*.' (xx, emphasis mine)

Not surprisingly, Coghill's picture of Oliphant has been repainted by Oliphant's critics, who often use some of the same words as their brush strokes--"womanliness" being the most popular. Q. D. Leavis, for example, whose work we must acknowledge as doing much towards re-establishing Oliphant as a great writer,[11] still hands us in her

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[11] In her introduction to the *Autobiography and Letters* she rightfully criticizes the first biography of Oliphant--V. and R. A. Colby's--for what she calls its "deprecatory

introduction to the autobiography a near reproduction of Coghill's portrait. She refers to Oliphant as "uncomplaining and selfless" (161), and proudly--without critique--describes her through the eyes of her contemporaries: "there is a consensus of opinion as to her charm, dignity, *womanliness*, witty conversation and brilliant intelligence" (160, emphasis mine). The feminist critic Elizabeth Winston presents a similar picture of Oliphant by placing her in a category of women writers whose "need to assure readers of their *womanliness* results in apologies, disclaimers, and words of self-deprecation" in their autobiographies (94, emphasis mine).

Other critics also bought Coghill's portrait of Oliphant and resold it through their emphasis on how perfectly Oliphant fit the category of "Victorian lady," a category virtually synonymous with the genteel "womanly" image of domesticity described in Coghill's passage. For example, Lucy Poate Stebbins portrays her as a woman who, despite her continual "writing and publishing," had a "life

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account of a writer represented as mainly a pot-boiler," an account clearly implied by the Colbys' title for the biography: *The Equivocal Virtue: Mrs. Oliphant and the Victorian Literary Marketplace* (159). She argues that the biography "does not do justice to Mrs Oliphant as the considerable and original novelist, the intelligent literary critic and the exemplary woman of letters that she needs to be recognized as having been" (159). In her introduction to *Miss Marjoribanks*, she asserts that the novel should be ranked with the work of Jane Austin and George Eliot, demonstrating, in fact, ways in which it is superior to Eliot's *Middlemarch*.

[which] seemed that of a purely domestic Victorian lady" (170). Stebbins compares her to Queen Victoria, stating that "both had become ideal Victorian ladies. They were [both]," she contends, "notable among the honorable women who were 'widows indeed,' bereaved mothers, staunch supporters of the Home and Christian faith, patient bearers of uncommon burdens" (189). Oliphant's non-domestic and domestic labor, work that her widowhood and class position necessitated, disappears in this description; Oliphant is presented as the epitome of Victorian "womanliness" and respectability--a mythical norm which was really only available to women of the genteel middle and upper classes who did not need to perform such labor.[12]

In addition to this widely promulgated image of genteel "womanliness" which Coghill first created for Oliphant in her preface, Coghill also added to the Oliphant legend and to feminist scholars' avoidance of this important writer by portraying Oliphant as an anti-feminist, as one who completely rejected women's suffrage. She created this image by including in her choice of the letters that

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[12] Many women from all levels of the middle class, and even some women of the upper class, performed a great deal of visible domestic labor that did not fit the "Angel in the House" ideal. As I explain in Chapter Three, most middle-class households employed only one servant, and thus middle-class women were responsible for a great deal of the domestic labor themselves. In addition, the issue of domestic servitude is especially complex because many households--of all classes--utilized female family members as unpaid domestic workers.

supplemented the autobiography[13] a quotation from one letter "which refers to Mill's mad notion of the franchise for women'" (Williams 106). This letter, as Williams explains, represents Oliphant's early views on the issue--she wrote the letter in 1866 "*à propos* of an article, 'The Great Unrepresented', which appeared in *Blackwood's*," an article which "did not say that women who wanted the vote should not have it, only that [Oliphant] did not want it herself" (106). Williams points out that Oliphant's views changed: "By 1880 she was prepared to say in public, 'I think it is highly absurd that I should not have the vote, if I want one'" (108), and by the 1890s to say in print that Mill's "work, 'though it brought him no credit', helped to produce 'those great and beneficial alterations and new stipulations in law which have made the position of women so much more independent and worthy'" (107). She believed, according to Williams, in many feminist causes: "a Married Women's Property Act, a mother's right to the custody of her children, women doctors, and university education for girls" (108); thus, she was hardly the epitome of the conservative and "womanly" Victorian anti-feminist.

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[13] I focus in this chapter primarily upon a comparison of the originally published, edited text of the autobiography--Coghill's version--and the complete manuscript recently published. I plan to do future research, however, which will compare Coghill's choice of letters for the *Autobiography and Letters* with as complete a set of Oliphant's letters as is currently available in various collections, especially those of the National Library of Scotland.

The Colbys, whose 1966 biography remained for twenty years the sole biography of Oliphant and thus the only published source besides Coghill's for studying Oliphant's life, no doubt had access to most of these facts; however, they still present Oliphant as just such a "womanly" anti-feminist. They repeat and reinscribe Coghill's portrayal, and in doing so, also help to create that "pure womanly" atmosphere surrounding Oliphant, which apparently led most feminist critics to ignore her. They say of Oliphant that

> she scorned the fight for women's suffrage and equal rights as unfeminine and demeaning to the sex. . . . A devoted mother who was fortunate enough to have a career which she could pursue within her home, she opposed any activity which would take women outside the domestic circle.[14] . . . [S]he disliked seeing her sex compete with men on any economic or social level. (202-3)

Thus, through merely one unrepresentative quotation from a letter and the "womanly" portrayal of Oliphant in the preface, Coghill--along with the critics she inspired--did much towards constructing the Oliphant legend. Her rearrangement of the original manuscript of the autobiography and her excision of over one-fourth of the text, however, did a great deal more towards that construction. And as I have pointed out, it is Coghill's edited version of the autobiography that most critics use to

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[14] It is ironic that the Colbys make this assertion, given that their biography details the extensive travels of Oliphant--not only throughout Europe but to cities like Jerusalem and Damascus--travels which she undertook for her career.

interpret and construct Oliphant's subjectivity. I turn now to one such critic's interpretation of the autobiography--Linda H. Peterson's--because a close reading of her essay, "Audience and the Autobiographer's Art: An Approach to the *Autobiography* of Mrs. M. O. W. Oliphant," will begin to demonstrate the extent to which Coghill's editing process has negatively affected, indeed shaped, interpretations of Oliphant's text and the subjectivity presented through it. It will also make clear how much closer to a slanted, misleading biography the *Autobiography and Letters* actually is--a biography faithful to the legend and not the life of Margaret Oliphant.

Because Peterson uses for her analysis only the edited version of the autobiography, she makes assertions concerning the autobiography and the motives behind its writing which an examination of the manuscript version will refute. She analyzes the structure of the autobiography, assuming it is one that Oliphant chose and utilized, then constructs the meaning of the text based upon Oliphant's supposed strategy. Because for Peterson "[s]tructure is . . . strategy. Its task is not simply to organize the work but to present convincingly the autobiographer's conception of himself and his [sic] life's patterns" (171), structure is a strategy for constructing and representing subjectivity. However, what Peterson considers Oliphant's strategies in the autobiography, and thus Oliphant's self-

construction, clearly are not Oliphant's; rather, they are Coghill's. As Jay argues, it was "[t]he reorderings and suppressions" of Coghill's editing process that "wrenched the form [of the manuscript] a step away from the autobiographical impulse that had engendered it and a step nearer to the biographical record expressly forbidden by Oliphant upon her death-bed" (ix). Not surprisingly, much of what Peterson argues is Oliphant's motivation in writing the autobiography turns out to be exactly what would fit into Coghill's "biographical" "womanly" portrait of Oliphant, as well as the reproductions of that portrait by Oliphant's contemporaries and more recent critics.

Peterson's argument follows the same lines as Langbauer's: that the "autobiography is both a lament and apology" (vii). She contends that Oliphant's "primary motives behind the writing of the *Autobiography*" (168) were two-fold: to present an apology for and explanation of "why [her] work was inferior" (163), and to gain her audience's sympathy by convincing them to see her life as she saw it. Locating in the *Autobiography* "a pattern not inherent in the events [of Oliphant's life] themselves, but discovered in (or imposed upon) those events as the autobiographer looks back upon the course of h[er] life" (169), Peterson considers it significant that "[i]n the opening pages" of the text, "Oliphant calls herself a sort of [Victorian] Andrea del Sarto" (161)--"a promising young artist whose

family misfortunes ha[ve] repeatedly forced h[er] to compromise h[er] artistic goals" (169). It is within this context that Oliphant compares the success of George Eliot and George Sand to her own failure "to make a name for herself" (161). Peterson thus refers to the "pattern" of the text as a "'del Sarto' pattern: early achievement and promise--family crisis--artistic compromise" (169). She concludes that such a structuring of the text "persuade[s] [the] audience to read the tragic pattern in Mrs. Oliphant's life" and, through anecdotes related within the structure, "teach[es] [the] audience to read that pattern sympathetically" (173).

Certainly, Coghill's re-structuring of Oliphant's text had just such an effect upon the audience, as evidenced by the response of Oliphant critics over the last hundred years. But would the audience have responded differently if they had been offered the structure or "pattern" Oliphant herself used for the autobiography? To address this question I will compare the pattern and content of the edited version of the autobiography with that of the original manuscript. Coghill's re-structuring does seem to follow the "del Sarto" pattern; from its very first pages, however, the manuscript version follows a significantly different pattern. As Peterson points out, the opening pages of the edited version consist primarily of the "artistic compromise" which she then pinpoints as appearing

third in the "del Sarto" sequence of the rest of the text. Interestingly, these descriptions of del Sarto-like "compromise" are the very passages so frequently cited and re-cited by critics--the ones instrumental in the construction and perpetuation of the Oliphant legend. The first complete passage of the manuscript, however, constructs Oliphant, not as an Andrea del Sarto to be pitied for the circumstances that created her artistic "compromise" and failure, but rather as a "giant" to be respected for the strength and determination that resulted, despite enormous obstacles, in what was perhaps her greatest artistic achievement--The Chronicles of Carlingford. Coghill decided, however, not only to begin the autobiography with something far less flattering to Oliphant; she deleted altogether this important passage.

Coghill downplays the significance of the passage and her removal of it by actually discussing it in her preface. She depicts the passage as so irrelevant and useless that the audience is steered away from even questioning its omission. The passage was, she explains, part of what made her and Denny Oliphant feel "great disappointment" upon "examin[ing] the manuscript" (xxi): "Th[is] first entry" in the manuscript, she claims, "was written in 1860, and mentions, rather than records, the struggles of her early widowhood" (xxi). Unless Jay has failed to include a rather significant passage of the complete text, which is doubtful,

not only is Coghill incorrect in her dating of the passage in question--it must have been dated after 1860 because it refers to Oliphant's "new start" (4), her writing of the first of the Chronicles of Carlingford stories[15]--but she is also incorrect in her assessment that the passage merely "mentions" Oliphant's "struggles."

The passage provides rather important detail, not about Oliphant's "artistic compromise," but about her artistic struggle as a single woman--a struggle produced by her editors at *Blackwood's*, whom she refers to in not-so-flattering terms as "the hard men" who "told [her] they did not want any story from [her]" (3). The first few sentences of the passage link her decision to remain a single woman with the difficulties she had with her publisher; they also detail a pivotal point in her writing career, a point that resulted in her ultimate success with the Chronicles of Carlingford series:[16]

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[15] Relying on evidence from Oliphant's *Annals of a Publishing House, Volume 2*, Williams demonstrates that Oliphant first began writing the stories in the early part of 1861, "probably in March" (39-40). Oliphant herself reveals in the manuscript of the autobiography (pages 90-91) that she first began writing the stories at the end of the "severe winter" of "1860-61" (90).

[16] The first of the series was the short story "The Executor," which appeared in *Blackwood's* in May of 1861. Eventually the series included *The Executor*, *The Rector* and *The Doctor's Family* (*Blackwood's*, September 1861-January 1862), *Salem Chapel* (*Blackwood's*, February 1862-January 1863), *The Perpetual Curate* (*Blackwood's*, June 1863-September 1864), *Miss Marjoribanks* (*Blackwood's*, February 1865-May 1866), and *Phoebe Junior: A Last Chronicle of Carlingford* (1876). Williams argues that with *The Rector*

> To return to the idea with which I started that it was better when I steadily made up my mind in Edinburgh to enter without any props upon my natural lonely life--I am not sure that it was a good idea after all. This was the time when I got into the last deeps with my work. That time when John Blackwood sent me back paper after paper and driven half desperate I dashed at the first story of the Chronicles of Carlingford and wrote it in two or three days feeling as if it was my last chance. It was my turning point. (3)

Jay argues that Oliphant obviously considered "this episode as pivotal in her career" because of "the frequency with which she retells it"--later on in the autobiography and also in her *Annals of a Publishing House: William Blackwood and His Sons* (161). Jay also notes that the passage, with its discussion of Oliphant's decision "to face life as a single woman[,] seems to offer corroboration to speculations that Oliphant received and rejected a marriage proposal from the Revd Robert Herbert Story" around this time (161). The passage deals, then, not so much with Oliphant's "artistic compromise" but with the consequences of choosing to be a writer and to remain single in a sexist, classist, male-dominated culture.

By beginning the autobiography with a questioning of her choice to remain a single woman--"I am not so sure that

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and *The Doctor's Family*, Oliphant "suddenly made the breakthrough from hack-work into literature" (40). The series itself also brought Oliphant a measure of financial success; for *The Perpetual Curate* she received £1500--the most she was ever paid for one of her books. As Williams points out, this was "an enormous sum in those days" (44). In fact, it demonstrates the upward class mobility Oliphant's profession afforded her, for this sum was probably over *ten* times her father's annual income.

it [remaining single] was a good idea after all"--and thus to live without the potential privileges afforded to a woman married to a middle-class man, it is not her choice of motherhood over her art that is of importance, but rather the effect that not choosing to remarry a middle-class man (and thus *perhaps* to align herself with this man's cultural and financial power[17]) had upon the way others (men in particular) viewed and rewarded her art. Rather than apologizing for and defending her own sacrifice of artistic genius for her children, we find Oliphant explaining the reality of her struggles as a single woman as well as describing her strength and success despite these realities. She thus focuses on how the gender and class aspects of her subjectivity impact upon the reception of her art. A single middle-class woman with children, who has no private income outside of her own daily labor, is in a potentially more precarious financial position than a woman who has no

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[17] I am careful to say "potential" privileges and "*perhaps*" align with such power because marriage to a middle-class man did not (and does not today) automatically result in cultural and financial privilege for women. As Oliphant's life story demonstrates, marriage to a middle-class man can actually reduce one's cultural and financial power. Marriage often results in children, who obviously produce financial (as well as physical and emotional) burdens for women. In addition, if a man is unsuccessful financially and/or becomes ill, as was the case with Oliphant's husband, his wife is then forced to work to pay off the debts he incurs as well as to support the entire family, which was Oliphant's situation. Drunkenness, gambling, and/or physical abuse on the part of a husband (or other relative--for Oliphant, it was her brother and his alcoholism) also result in oppression, and not privilege, for women.

children and yet has the "protection" of a man; in short, she is in a far worse position than a woman like the one Oliphant most often compares herself to--George Eliot--who she claims was "kept, [un]like her, in a mental greenhouse and taken care of" (15). Oliphant includes in the passage an emphasis upon the absence of a man in her life, of "props" to lend support: "I had not a soul to tell my trouble to or console me," she says, "I had to put all the young anxious heart into my work" (3).

The passage does not construct Oliphant, however, as an Andrea del Sarto to be understood and pitied. It does not detail Oliphant's "early achievement and promise," then "family crisis," then subsequent "artistic compromise," but rather her strength and determination throughout: how she succeeded artistically, "dash[ing] at the first story of the Chronicles of Carlingford and wr[iting] it in two or three days" (3); how she was "moved to a kind of anguish of resistance and determination not to be overcome" (3); how she "was not beaten that time after all," but was "from that time" on like "the giant who recovered strength every time he touched the earth" (3-4). Rather than resulting in "artistic compromise" and a sense of failure, the struggle with her editors--her "fall" (4) as she calls it--gave her a continuing strength: "It was bitter at the time," she writes, "but it is not bitter to look back upon. I seem to think more kindly of myself after all the follies I know of

when I remember such a trial" (3); it was, she concludes, "good for me and gave me a new start" (4). That "new start" was the writing and publication of what were perhaps her most popular, most successful artistic works: the Chronicles of Carlingford. Thus, the supposedly self-effacing, self-deprecating writer who placed concerns of motherhood and family over artistic achievement, begins her autobiography, her self-construction, not with a focus on how pitiful and to be pitied she is because of "the tragic pattern of [her] life," but rather with an emphasis upon her strength and determination as an artist who is affected by very specific aspects of her subjectivity--gender and class in particular.

The passage that opens the manuscript also provides an important context to Oliphant's second accounting of the "turning point" episode. When Oliphant retells this episode later in the autobiography (pages 90-91 of the complete version), the first telling of the story is necessary to viewing her supposed "artistic compromise" and "inferiority" in very different terms than the ones that Coghill and her critics imposed upon her. After this second recitation, Oliphant once again highlights the gender and class aspects of her subjectivity--her position as a single woman writer with financial burdens--in terms of the impact not having the support of a man has upon the financial remuneration of her writing:

> The story [which began the Carlingford series] was successful, and my fortune, comparatively

> speaking, was made. It has never been very much, never anything like what many of my contemporaries attained, and yet *I have done very well for a woman, and a friendless woman with no one [no man] to make the best of me*, and quite unable to do that for myself. I never could fight for a higher price or do anything but trust to the honour of those I had to deal with. Whether this was the reason why, though I did very well on the whole, I never did anything so well as others, I can't tell, or whether it was really inferiority on my part. (91, emphasis mine).

The phrase, "friendless woman with no one to make the best of me," clearly relates to the opening sentence of the autobiography, to Oliphant's decision "to enter without any props upon [her] natural lonely life" (3). In the beginning of her autobiography, remaining single is constructed as what is "natural," versus what might be considered during the Victorian Period as the more "natural" role--that of wife.[18] But to choose this "natural" single state has consequences, ones which Oliphant elaborates upon in the second telling of the episode. To be a single woman writer,

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[18] It is important to note, though, what Williams points out: that the Victorians did have "a strong prejudice against the remarriage of widows" (42); thus, one could consider Oliphant's choice here quite conventional. Given her particular class position, however--having been left by her husband with debt versus a secure inheritance--Oliphant's decision to remain single could also be said to demonstrate a class-specific consciousness of the *potential* financial unreliability of husbands. As Reginia Gagnier points out, working-class women (and I argue, a certain number of middle-class women) are affected by what she terms "gender inversion" whereby "strong" women are "self-reliant and responsible for dependents" whereas "dependent" men are "disempowered, or absent" (44). Oliphant's self-construction thus demonstrates the way in which her subjectivity is positioned along complex gender and class trajectories.

to be without a man, is to be "friendless" in a very specific manner: it is to be a writer without someone to promote oneself and one's work, without someone who can "fight" successfully "for a higher price." The "this" referred to in the passage--"whether *this* was the reason why" (emphasis mine)--represents the "reality" that Oliphant dealt with: being a woman without a man who *might* lend her social and financial support. This "reality" is juxtaposed, however, with what is merely a possible reality--"whether it was really inferiority on [Oliphant's] part" which resulted in her "fortune" "never be[ing] very much." The possibility of "Oliphant's" supposed artistic compromise, her "inferiority," is thus interrogated through the details presented in both the first and second recountings of the "turning point" episode, an episode which emphasizes not her motherhood but her authorship, her career.

These details of a gendered, classed subject position evidence the tension existing between the two versions of Oliphant's subjectivity--Coghill's and Oliphant's. Coghill's construction in the edited version of the autobiography and the critics' subsequent reinscription of that construction produce the story of a woman writer who compromised her art for motherhood and "womanly" duties, and who was thus a failure as a writer but a success as a mother. Oliphant's self-construction in the original version of the autobiography produces, by contrast, the

story of a single woman writer who faced, with strength and determination, the struggles created by a sexist, classist society and who became a fairly successful artist despite those restrictions. Oliphant's self-construction as a mother and her success or failure in this role are far more complicated than Coghill or most critics would have us see them. I will argue that any construction of herself as a "failure" derives more from losses associated with motherhood than with authorship. Oliphant constructs herself as a writer "failed" *by* motherhood, a "failure" (81) produced primarily by something outside of her control--the early death of her children[19]--and not as a failed artist or Victorian Andrea del Sarto. Oliphant focuses very little, in fact, on her "womanly" duties to her children; she emphasizes instead the way her children functioned *for her* as companions, as "props" supporting *her*. Thus, any sympathy that Oliphant exacts from the reader through presenting the "tragic pattern of her life" relates more to the tragedy of her motherhood, not of her authorship.

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[19] Oliphant gave birth to six children: Maggie in 1853, Marjorie Isabella in 1854, an unnamed boy in 1855, Cyril Francis (Tiddy) in 1856, Stephen Thomas in 1858, and Francis Romano (Cecco) in 1859. All six of them died before her own death. Three of these children--Marjorie Isabella, the unnamed boy, and Stephen Thomas--died shortly after they were born. Maggie died in 1864 at age ten, Cyril in 1890 at age 33, and Francis in 1894 at age 34. Even Oliphant's adopted "son," her nephew Francis Wilson (Frank), died at age 25.

Sympathy, however, is not what we see created by the opening passage of the original version of the autobiography. This passage and the ten pages that follow it create a construction of a self oppositional to the del Sarto, failed artist/successful mother version Coghill chooses to begin with. They focus primarily on Oliphant's loss of her daughter Maggie--how she has been "failed" by motherhood and by God with that loss--and thus contain description of "rough" aspects of Oliphant's subjectivity that would not have fit in with Coghill's or the critics' construction of Oliphant as a self-sacrificing, "respectable" lady and mother. The opening of Coghill's version, on the other hand, fits this "respectable" construction perfectly. It reads, "Twenty-one years have passed since I wrote what is on the opposite page. I have been reading it all with tears; sorry, very sorry for that poor soul who has lived through so much since" (3). Readers of the *Autobiography and Letters* have, of course, no idea what appears "on the opposite page" because Coghill has excised that page, along with the nine others. Readers have only what follows the passage as a context from which to discern the source of Oliphant's self-pity. Not surprisingly, that context consists primarily of passages that ensure a del Sarto-based interpretation--passages that

are the exact ones so often cited by Oliphant critics.[20]

In some instances, the passages themselves have been altered to such an extent that the meaning is changed entirely. For example, the often quoted sentence from Coghill's version, "I am in very little danger of having my life written, and that is all the better in this point of view--for what could be said of me?" (8-9) was originally two sentences, which read: "I am in very little danger of having my life written. *No one belonging to me has energy enough to do it, or even to gather the fragments for someone else* and that is all the better in this point of view--for what could be said of me?" (17 emphasis mine). Coghill excised the very important material detail that no one close to Oliphant, no one close enough to write a biography or to "gather the fragments for someone else," had the *energy*--the time, strength, leisure--to do so. Oliphant emphasizes this significant class and gender difference. (Those close to her were *women*.) Without this emphasis the passage appears to read that no one had enough *interest* to write a biography, for nothing important could be said of Oliphant; she was merely a failed artist to be pitied.

Coghill obviously chose to begin the *Autobiography and Letters* with Oliphant's "pitying" of herself, and she distorts that "pitying" by mystifying its source. She has

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[20] For examples of these passages see pages four and five of this chapter.

to create an extremely odd opening--a reference to what Oliphant wrote "on [an] opposite page" invisible to the reader--to achieve this pitying and pitiful beginning. Coghill must footnote the very first sentence of the edited version with an explanation: "It has been thought better to print the earlier portion, or such of it as might interest general readers, after this part of Mrs. Oliphant's journal, so as to preserve the sequence of the narrative" (3). Her explanation is a suspect one, however. The extremely small part of the "earlier portion" that she does bother to place later on in the text--a total of five short paragraphs out of ten pages, less than one-third of the text which originally preceded the "Twenty-one years have passed" opening--does not necessarily "preserve the sequence of the narrative." For example, Coghill moved one of these paragraphs to page 67; she positioned it in the narrative immediately after Oliphant's return to London as a widow with three small children from a trip to Rome where her husband had recently died. The paragraph begins with Oliphant's comparison of herself with Charlotte Brontë:

> I was reading of Charlotte Brontë the other day, and could not help comparing myself with the picture more or less as I read. I don't suppose my powers are equal to hers--my work to myself looks perfectly pale and colourless beside hers--but yet I have had far more experience and, I think, a fuller conception of life. I have learned to take perhaps more a man's view of mortal affairs,--to feel that the love between men and women, the marrying and giving in marriage,

> occupy in fact so small a portion of either existence or thought.[21] (10)

The remainder of the paragraph contains an important passage often cited by critics which, without the original context of Oliphant's grief over her daughter's death, is readily interpreted as fitting Oliphant's del Sarto, self-sacrificing, "womanly" pattern. I have quoted part of this passage earlier (on page 5), but it is significant enough to cite in its entirety here in order to see the way in which Coghill distorted rather than "preserved the sequence of [Oliphant's] narrative":

> When I die I know what people will say of me: they will give me credit for courage (which I almost think is not courage but insensibility), and for honesty and honourable dealing; they will say that I did my duty with a kind of steadiness, not knowing how I rebelled and groaned under the rod. Scarcely anyone who cares to speculate further will know what to say of my working power and my own conception of it; for, except one or two, even my friends will scarcely believe how little possessed I am with any thought of it all,--how

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[21] Interestingly, Oliphant is often critiqued for not focusing enough in the *Autobiography* on the "love between" her husband and herself or on the details of their "marrying." By privileging heterosexual romance, such critics impose a heterosexist norm, and this heterosexism is apparent in their estimations of Oliphant's writing in general. For example, Stebbins argues that Oliphant "was hampered in the domestic novel by her disbelief in romantic love and her low opinion of men" (177). Oliphant, on the other hand, both in her autobiography (especially the manuscript version) and in her literary works, presents a view of women and of gender relations in general that does not reduce women to the role of romantic partners for men. Critics who insist upon a heterosexist focus are reinscribing what Adrienne Rich terms "compulsory heterosexuality." The Victorian cultural norm of "womanly," respectable "lady" imposed upon Oliphant certainly reinforced such compulsory heterosexuality.

> little credit I feel due to me, how accidental most things have been, and how entirely a matter of daily labour, congenial work, sometimes now and then the expression of my own heart, almost always the work most pleasant to me this has been. I wonder if God were to try me with the loss of this gift, such as it is, whether I should feel it much? If I could live otherwise I do not think I should. If I could move about the house, and serve my children with my own hands, I know I should be happier. But this is vain talking. (10-11)

Because Coghill repositions the passage to appear in the narrative years before the death of Oliphant's daughter, and in fact positions it instead immediately after the death of her husband, she constructs Oliphant as claiming in her widow's grief that her authorship--her "working power," her "gift"--is thoroughly insignificant compared to the domestic roles of wife and mother. In the preface, Coghill carefully details these roles in a class-specific manner: Oliphant is the genteel "lady," the domestic spiritual "angel," whose "working power" as a writer is subservient to her more "respectable" domestic power.

However, Oliphant hardly appears angelic in the original pages that immediately preceded and followed the above passage--the pages Coghill cut. If we recontextualize the passage as it originally appeared in the manuscript, a very different assessment of both Oliphant's domestic role and her "working power" becomes evident. Rather than the "Angel in the House," the spiritually superior guide, Oliphant appears in these pages as a "rough," almost blasphemous woman. She wavers between what she calls "the

agonizing faith that God demands of [her]" (7) and rather blasphemous upbraidings of God for his having "take[n] [her] ewe-lamb, [her] woman-child from [her]" (4): "I have not been resigned [to God's will]. I cannot feel resigned, my heart is sore as if it was an injury. God forgive me, but I find myself calling her my ewe-lamb as if it was to reproach Him" (4); "Whatsoever you shall ask in my name seemed to come to me like a mockery" (4); "Can I trust her with Him? Can I trust . . . that He has her safe, that there has been no mistake, no error . . . ?" (7); "Oh Father Almighty. I strive against thee. I reproach thee, I do not submit, but my reasons and my heart alike confess that thou must know thine own purpose best" (8).

The manner in which she reproaches God also evidences her self-construction, not so much as a genteel mother who sacrifices for her children, but rather as a working woman who receives consolation and support from *them*. God has failed her by removing that support:

> I had but one woman-child and she was just beginning to sympathize with me, to comfort me, and at this dear moment, her little heart expanding, her little mind growing, her sweet life blossoming day by day, God has taken her away out of my arms and refuses to hear my cry and prayer. . . . [M]y heart cries out against God's will. Now I have to go limping and anxious through the world all the days of my life. . . . [with] nobody to make brightness possible to me. (5)

Oliphant constructs herself as crippled--"limping and anxious"--without the support of her daughter. The emphasis in the passage is clearly upon Oliphant's needs and how

Maggie could have filled them, not upon how Oliphant existed for her children. And Oliphant focuses upon the fact that Maggie, as her daughter, was even more important to her than her sons could be:

> So many burdens as I have, so much to do, so little help in this hard way of life, he might have left me my little band of children unbroken. By then the perfect number, and oh my firstborn, my only daughter, my Maggie. . . . Oh my Lord why didst thou grudge to me the one blossom of womankind that I thought my own. (9)

She emphasizes how essential Maggie's "companionship" was to her, especially the gender-specific aspect of that closeness:

> She was my compensation for the solitude of my life. My boys, God bless them, if they are spared must go away from me, must leave me. My daughter would have been at least for all the sweet years of her youth my constant companion by night and day. Now in this innermost chamber of the heart which no man except a husband can enter and he but a little, I am alone always, alone in the world for ever. Help me, Oh help me Lord. I am a poor helpless woman without any strength and thou hast snatched away the props on which I leant. (13)

God is depicted here in negative terms as one who has "snatched away" her support, her "props"; clearly this support was her daughter, for her husband could only have been close to her "but a little."

Given the context then of the passage which Coghill repositioned to appear well before Maggie's death, we can see that Oliphant's self-construction as a mother is far more complex than Coghill's positioning would have it be. Within this context, Oliphant's discussion of her "working

power" and of "how little possessed of any thought of it" she is, as well as her desire to "serve her children with her own hands," begins to take on a vastly different interpretation than the one Coghill steers us towards. If we consider, in addition to the context I have just laid out, another passage similar to the one Coghill kept and repositioned, we will see that Oliphant constructs herself instead as viewing authorship--her "working power"--as exceedingly valuable, as important to her as her very health. This passage clarifies the one Coghill chose not to cut by demonstrating the way in which Oliphant constructs herself as bargaining with God. She portrays herself as bargaining with her most valuable assets, her "most costly offering"--her working "powers" and the class privilege they afforded her--in order to have her daughter alive again:

> If I could have filled up that grave which was waiting for her with any sacrifice, my own health, my powers such as they are, any, the most costly offering. If I could have kept her still and worked for her and her brothers, not easily and with credit as I do now, but tilling with my hands in poverty and care. Oh how I should have welcomed the alternative. But God gave me no alternative, not even time to be familiar with the thought. (8-9)

Thus, any sacrifice Oliphant is willing to make here depends upon the importance of her writing, not its insignificance. She chooses to construct her writing ability as being like her health--"the most costly offering" she could give to God in return for her daughter's life, a life she needs to sustain her own, to give her support "by

night and day" (13). Oliphant does construct herself as sacrificial for her children, but so that *they* can sustain *her*. It is as a deal with God to "ke[ep] [Maggie] still" that she emphasizes her willingness to give up her class status completely through "tilling with her hands in poverty and care," a willingness echoed in the passage Coghill repositioned: "If I could move about the house, and serve my children *with my own hands*, I know I should be happier" (11, emphasis mine). The "serv[ing]" of her children in both these passages cannot represent, however, the serving done by a genteel sacrificial "angel"; a middle-class "angel" would not "till" with her "own hands." Such "tilling" would be "rough," hardly "respectable"--as rough indeed as Oliphant's upbraidings and bargainings with God.

Oliphant emphasizes her class privilege in relation to poor women by stating that, in comparison, she "works easily and with credit." (She repeatedly received advances from her publishers and, in fact, was seldom not indebted to them; she continually owed them written work in return for these advance payments.) To receive such "credit," then, Oliphant's reputation as an author had to be a respectably successful one. Thus, Oliphant's self-construction focuses upon her success as a writer: had she "failed," her "powers" would hardly be such, would hardly be a "costly offering" with which to bargain; given her own class background before her writing career (lower middle-class), she could hardly

have had a more privileged class position to offer up had her writing been a failure. Critics who make judgments about Oliphant's success or failure as a writer tend to overlook the "big fact" (14) that it was through writing that Oliphant achieved astounding upward class mobility.[22] That mobility was certainly different than the kind attained by most women, who rose through inheritance or marriage, versus the "daily labour" (11) and "constant work" (136) Oliphant refers to herself as having done; however, like some of her upper middle-class and even upper-class sisters, Oliphant was able to travel, to live in genteel homes, to eat fine foods, to move in the best literary circles, and to educate her sons at Eton during a time when it was considered the "'most aristocratic of schools'"[23] (Williams

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[22] The extent of this upward mobility is evident from the beginning of Oliphant's career: as Williams notes, her first novel, *Margaret Maitland*, "quickly went into a third edition, after which [the publisher Henry] Colburn gave [Oliphant] £150" (9), a huge sum for Oliphant in that "it was probably more than her father made in a year" (9).

[23] Oliphant's upward mobility did cause problems in this area, however; her sons, while they had received an "aristocratic" education, did not have aristocratic or even upper middle-class connections. Without such "cultural capital" they had great difficulty finding positions once they graduated. In a class-specific passage excised by Coghill, Oliphant remarks that while the literary critic, editor, and philosopher Leslie Stephen was "kind to her boys" (Coghill left *this* part of the remark stand), "later when he might have given [her son] Cecco work on the National Biography . . . he did not do so" (150). His behavior was typical of those with connections. Oliphant writes (and Coghill removes it), "No one indeed, however good they may have been in professions towards me ever did anything to help me in that chief care" (150).

88). Her authorship, then, was clearly a success if one considers class mobility, as Oliphant certainly does throughout her text. Oliphant makes the struggles she endured for that success visible throughout, as well as the differences between her class position and that of other women writers and women in general, especially those who were married or "taken care of" (15) by men. Any "failure" she discusses involves her being "failed" by God, by his taking away her motherhood.

Her writing "powers" appear even more valuable--especially these ten pages expressing her grief over her daughter's death--when we discover that Oliphant hoped that they might help other parents to deal with the loss of their children. Jay explains that Oliphant "inserted a slip of paper" into the manuscript right before the "Twenty-one years have passed" passage which Coghill chose to use as the opening of the *Autobiography and Letters*. The note, while it states that her editors must decide whether or not to cut the pages preceding it, makes clear the worth that Oliphant saw in those pages[24]:

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[24] This gesture--stating that the choice to make editorial cuts belongs to someone else, and then undermining that choice by providing evidence as to why those very cuts should *not* be made--appears elsewhere in the manuscript. For example, Coghill excises the following editorial directive: "If Denny publishes this, or any part of it, she will, of course, or any one else who may have the charge of it, cut out any of these details as she pleases" (130). Oliphant reverses this statement, however, when she declares, "It is not likely that such family details would be of interest to the public. And yet, as a matter of fact,

> 'Whether anything should be taken from the preliminary pages, Denny, with the help of perhaps Cousin Annie, or some other friend (none so capable) whom she can trust, must decide. My musings at this dreadful moment when my firstborn was taken from me might perhaps give a sense of fellowship to other mourners--I know not.' (13)

Coghill "failed" these "other mourners," then, by cutting "the preliminary pages"--pages in which Oliphant constructs herself as a successful author, but a mother "failed" by a God who took her "firstborn" from her. That Oliphant hoped to "give a sense of fellowship to other mourners" clearly indicates that for her, written "musings" derived from extreme grief and even blasphemous struggles with God constitute a valuable, indeed "respectable," means of helping others. Her writing "powers" translate into the very "props" needed to sustain "other mourners," which included, of course, other mothers.

Because critics rely only upon the edited version of the text, however, they tend to misread Oliphant's self-construction in terms of authorship and motherhood, distorting their interrelationship. They interpret her motherhood as having caused "failure" in her authorship. Later in the manuscript version of the autobiography, however, in another section that Coghill cut, Oliphant clarifies any "failure" as relating exclusively to motherhood, not authorship: "What can I say? It [my life]

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it is exactly those family details that are interesting,--the human story in *all* its chapters" (130, emphasis mine).

is gone altogether, like a bladder that has burst. I have no life any longer, for Cecco has followed Tiddy. The younger after the elder and on this earth I have no son--I have no child. I am a mother childless" (79). "It seems to me as if God had broken his word to me . . . . The heavens are to me as brass . . . . My three boys, for Frank was mine too--all now gone . . . . All failure, failure everything, and I am thought a successful woman . . . ." (80-81). The section containing these passages is similar to the ten pages of intense grief and blasphemous reproaches of God we have just discussed. It contains eight pages in which Oliphant responds to her sons' deaths. Coghill cut this section (pages 79-86), along with another one sixteen pages long (pages 44-60) in which Oliphant discusses Cyril's (Tiddy's) death.

It is in these sections that Oliphant expresses what are perhaps the "roughest" sentiments of the entire *Autobiography*--suicidal thoughts that are a direct result of her "failure" in terms of motherhood. After Cyril's death, she reveals the beginnings of such suicidal tendencies: "And I feel more and more strongly as if I never again could enter into the competition and strain of life[,] . . . [that] if I might go it would be better for everybody" (51). She does say several pages later, "I take back what I said one of these evenings when I have written in this book, that I thought with elation of the fact that my press of

work might be done in a certain time, and that I might hope to set far from this world" (56). Ironically, however, what she "take[s] back" here is the thought that she can kill herself "in about eighteen months" once she has *succeeded* enough with her writing "to leave Cecco in what will not be a bad position" financially (51). She has not wanted to die because her writing is a failure; rather, the success of her writing will allow her to take her life. And even though she "take[s] back" wanting to die here, she reveals quite explicitly in this section her former suicidal thoughts, as well as the deep depression she feels, which creates perhaps just as much misery:

> Which is worst I ask myself. The dreadful care that used to fill my days, especially that evening time before dinner, when I remember saying so often that I was perfectly miserable, that I felt as if I could kill myself. Oh the habitual misery of that hour--the growing suspense and terror and expectation--more active misery perhaps than anything will cause me now--instead of it there is now this awful blank not to be relieved, the cloud that none lifts, the dull dark pressure, the emptiness--which is worst? Oh how can I tell? (58)

Oliphant hardly appears here as the genteel "Angel in the House" of Coghill's edited version. Oliphant constructs herself as *non*domestic at what would normally be a "domestic" time--"that evening time before dinner"--when she "should" be thinking of her "womanly" household duty--the evening meal; instead, she contemplates suicide, a rather un"womanly" preoccupation. And she certainly does not

present herself here as the spiritual center of the household.

In the section written after Cecco's death, the suicidal remarks intensify, becoming more graphic, more "rough," especially because Oliphant employs a discourse of the body. Applying Bakhtin here is useful, as Oliphant's text presents a rather low-culture, lower-class "grotesque body,"[25] a body that erupts, that cannot be controlled or contained; it is clearly not the "classical body," with its "refined, orifice-less, laminated surface" (Kipnis 376), that derived from the "rise of individualism and the attendant formation and consolidation of *bourgeois* subjectivity" (Kipnis 377, emphasis mine). Beginning as we have seen with a reference to her life as "a bladder that has burst" (79)--imagery characteristic of the "grotesque body"--this section includes more of Oliphant's struggles with God, struggles that involve fighting against suicidal tendencies as well as against her own strong body. She implores God, "Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace. Make me not to live and live and never die" (82). She battles with herself and God:

> If I could be ill, not always in this horrible kind of bodily well-being. . . . I must quiet myself, I cannot die. I must wait God's pleasure.

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[25] See Chapter Two for a discussion of the "grotesque body" and its connection to working-class subjectivity, especially the way in which the academy enforces "refined" codes of behavior characteristic of the bourgeois "classic body."

> It is not in me to take a dose and end it. . . . Lord, I can't kill myself, I can't move away, release me for Jesus sake. . . . And He is thy son and there blest lives in everlasting communion, yet takest my sons from me and refusest to help me. Oh father, forgive me I know not what I say. (86)

Here she begins comparisons to Jesus--Jesus to her own sons, and thus herself to God--, and with these comparisons her bodily discourse becomes more graphic. "I must take up my cross" (86), she says, continuing,

> Oh this body and soul so full of anguish, my head that I could dash against the wall, but I cannot, I cannot. . . . This morning I said I was dead and felt nothing, now I am all wildly alive, suffering and aching and hardened in my sins, but of my mind not my body, my body is well, well, the horrible thing. I could turn to and work or write a love story or draw or skate or walk a mile--anything, anything--but my burden is more than I can bear. (86)

Oliphant emphasizes here her ability to "work" despite her "anguish" of "body and soul" (86). She could "write a love story" (86) because, as she reveals earlier, she is "as strong as an elephant. All this misery does not give [her] even a headache. [She] neither eat[s] nor sleep[s] for days together . . . [yet is] as well at the end of them as at the beginning" (81).

Oliphant constructs herself as a "failure" (81), as wishing to die now that she is a "mother childless"[26] (79),

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[26] This phrase, "mother childless," inverts the more common phrase "motherless child." This inversion serves to position Oliphant as an orphan who has lost her caretakers--ironically her children--who were her emotional "props." I am indebted to my colleague Venus S. Freeman for these observations.

yet at the same time as perfectly able to work. In the section responding to Cyril's death, she calls herself "a sort of machine, so little out of order, able to endure all things, always fit for work whatever has happened to [her]" (56). Although she is failed by God by his having taken away her motherhood, she can still succeed as a writer. Through a favorable comparison of herself with another Scottish writer, the famous Sir Walter Scott, she further constructs herself as a success. She even argues that she has far more stamina in writing her autobiography than he ever did:

> I have carried it on all this time steadily, a chapter a day, I suppose about twenty pages of an octavo book. Sir Walter when he was labouring to pay off his debts, speaks of writing a volume in twelve days I think. I have done it steadily in sixteen. He says no man can keep it up for long--but I have kept it up in spite of everything now for months and months. (55)

And while she admits that her "product is very different than his" (55), she emphasizes her success given her age: "And I am sixty-two, older than Sir Walter when he died. I am a wonder to myself . . ." (56). She also compares her grief to his, to "what he says of his wife's death" (56) in his journal, concluding, "Sir Walter had no grief but that. His great struggle and the loneliness of which he complains so pathetically, the broken life, the endless courage were never brought to such an awful crisis as this of mine. No child died before him" (57).

Despite her differences from Sir Walter Scott, however, she does emphasize their similar ethnicity, and it is this construction of ethnicity, this aspect of her subjectivity, which affords us a way to reenvision many instances in the text when Oliphant appears to be self-deprecating about her writing. Her emphasis on ethnicity is significant because it is something that Coghill either excises or that critics overlook when judging Oliphant's success or failure as a writer. For example, Oliphant discusses (and Coghill lets stand) her supposed "indifference" to her work as "really pride, with a mixture of Scotch shyness . . . and the strong Scotch sense of the absurdity of a chorus of praise, but which looks so often like detraction and bitterness, and has now definitely been accepted as such by the public in general" (15). Critics tend to ignore this explanation, however, and along with it Oliphant's other references to her ethnicity, especially her comparison of herself with Sir Walter Scott. In this comparison (which Coghill cut from the text) Oliphant again explains this supposed "indifference" as a Scotch pride which is "so entirely free of that self-regard which revolts even when it interests" (57):

> Some fool in the newspaper speaks of him [Scott] with the old foolish reproach about Abbotsford, that he cared nothing for his books, except as a way of making money and so forth. It would be vain to try to explain to him such a mind, which is of a different species and knows not even the

> language Scott speaks.[27] It is the nationality perhaps, the national brotherhood that makes me feel as if it were a bigger me that was speaking sometimes . . . . (57)

Oliphant's "bigger me" is diminished when critics exclude the ethnicity which she includes in her self-construction. As with Scott, Oliphant's critics have assumed that she "cared nothing for [her] books" (57). Oliphant's focus on her ethnicity allows for an alternative interpretation of her supposed indifference to her works, however, as does her remark (which Coghill let stand) that class and gender also play a part: "But perhaps my life has been too full of personal interests to leave me *at leisure* to talk of the creatures of my imagination, as some people do . . . (118, emphasis mine).

Without comparisons such as this one to a successful Scottish male writer, or descriptions such as the ones above

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[27] Interestingly, Oliphant is making the same point here as the feminist historian Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, who argues that "the varied forms that 'words' and 'language' take"--for example, the Scots "language" Oliphant refers to in this passage--"reflect the social location and relative power of the speakers. . . . While marking their speakers as 'Other,' they also give expression to 'other' experiences, permit coded discourse, and the expression of anger and protest" (35). Throughout the manuscript, Oliphant often protests against the "fool[s]" who are "of a different species" and do not know her "language." Thus, we ought to apply Oliphant's and Smith-Rosenberg's observations on the Scottish "language" to Oliphant herself, who, as Herbert Story explains, consciously chose to keep her Scottish accent throughout her life: her voice was "'marked with that homely Scottish accent which she never lost or wished to lose'" (Williams 38). It is important for us to "hear" Oliphant's ethnicity in her text, whether or not we can "hear" her Scottish accent.

in which Oliphant clarifies her "failure" in terms of motherhood, not authorship, critics are bound to misread Oliphant's self-construction in terms of motherhood and authorship. For example, Langbauer argues that there is a "persistent insinuation throughout the *Autobiography* that rather than her inspiration her children are the deadweights that sink her writing" (x), yet as we have seen, her children--Maggie especially--are the very "props" that sustain her and her writing. Indeed, with the conclusion of the autobiography--the same in both the edited and unedited versions--we see the extent to which Oliphant relied upon them, for she explains that without these "props" she "cannot write any more":

> I never went out but he [Cecco] was there to give me his arm. I seem to feel it now--the dear, thin, but firm arm. In the last four years after Cyril was taken from us, we were nearer and nearer. I can hear myself saying 'Cecco and I.' It was the constant phrase. But all through he was getting weaker: and I knew it, and tried not to know.
>
> And now here I am all alone.
>
> I cannot write any more. (154)

Even in constructing herself as unable "to write anymore" she makes evident her reliance upon her son Cecco as a "prop": both "his arm" and "the constant phrase" "'Cecco and I'" function here as the "props" which in the "now" of her writing support her. She "seem[s] to feel [his arm] *now*" (emphasis mine); she "can hear [her]self saying 'Cecco and I'" as she writes the very passage which proclaims her inability to write without her son's presence, a presence

that she re-invokes through her writing. And her writing in turn functions, or so she hoped it would, as a "prop" to "other mourners," to others who have lost *their* "props"; thus, writing and motherhood are intertwined--through her "failed" motherhood comes a power in writing, the power to support others by creating a collective "sense of fellowship" (13).

Langbauer reads the conclusion of the *Autobiography*, however, as evidence that Oliphant's children are "deadweights" sinking her writing, that Oliphant's emphasis on motherhood grants her only a "devastating power," which ultimately effaces her subjectivity as a writer, for it demonstrates her "failure" as a writer:

> Translating the problems of writing into the problems of motherhood . . . grant[s] her a devastating power. . . . [T]he effectiveness, if not also the subversiveness, of such a strategy is ultimately in question, for the one ultimately devastated, of course, is Oliphant herself. She must kill off her mother and daughter, especially, in order to write, yet both, as *Margarets*, are figuratively but absolutely part of herself. . . . The agonizing ending of Oliphant's autobiography . . . suggests that its ultimate effect--literally writing her out of existence as far as posterity is concerned--is only the logical conclusion of the impulses forming it" (xi).

Langbauer of course places upon Oliphant and her (edited) autobiography all responsibility for Oliphant's being written "out of existence as far as posterity is concerned" and as far as canonization and a place in the academy are concerned. It is apparent, however, that Langbauer's reliance on the *edited* version of the text is necessary to

her argument, especially her assertion that Oliphant "must kill off her mother and daughter, especially, in order to write." It was Coghill who "kill[ed] off" Oliphant's daughter and mother by excising from the *Autobiography* important passages, indeed numerous pages, dealing with them. Because the original opening pages focus almost exclusively on the importance of Oliphant's daughter, as well as on the importance of Oliphant's writing, we might argue that it is through this writing that Oliphant's daughter *lives*.

Oliphant might even have begun the *Autobiography* itself with a reference to her daughter. Although Jay's edition of the manuscript does not begin this way, the manuscript itself opens with the phrase "Sunday nights"; it is, Jay says in her "Note on the Text," "[t]he first phrase left to stand" amid "torn out" opening pages, erased words and "false starts," and it precedes a "heavily scored through" paragraph[28] (xix). "Sunday nights" could certainly refer to Oliphant's daughter, given that only a few pages later, the

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[28] Jay attributes the condition of the opening pages of the manuscript to Oliphant. These pages indicate limits that Oliphant herself may have set on the degree of "roughness" in her text. The potentially "rough" nature of some of these pages is strongly suggested by the very first entry (which appears prior to several torn out opening pages): "half-erased, [it] reads: '1849 23rd of January, a Black Day, a day to be remembered'" (xix). At this time Oliphant, aged 20, was working in London as a "housekeeper" for her drunken brother Willie. She was sent by her parents "to guard him against drink and debt" (Williams 8). Most likely this entry on a "day to be remembered" originally reported the rough details of "guard[ing]" her brother.

very next time the phrase appears, it is used to signify happy times with Maggie that Oliphant can no longer bear to think of now that she is dead: "When I think of the Sunday nights, how she used to get on my knees with her arms close clasped round me, it is too much to bear" (6). As with so many other passages dealing with Maggie, Coghill cut this passage, which comes towards the conclusion of the paragraph in which Oliphant says that without her "one woman-child" she will have "nobody to make brightness possible to [her]" (5). Maggie nearly disappears altogether from Coghill's version of the text; in fact, Coghill wipes Maggie and Oliphant's feelings for her out to such an extent that she even erases Oliphant's confession of her own effacement of her daughter in name. In a passage written in 1890, some 26 years after the passages on Maggie quoted above, Oliphant describes this effacement: "From the time of her death till now I have never named Maggie's name. I have avoided it and called her my child, my darling, never that familiar sound named" (46). Thus, we learn from the complete manuscript that it was through *writing* that Oliphant allowed her daughter to live in name (in both the 1864 and the 1890 passages), versus the killing off of her daughter through writing, which Langbauer claims.

As for Oliphant's mother, Coghill's version includes information that constructs her as a "respectable" lower middle-class Scottish woman who was a proud descendent of

the Oliphants of Kellie, "an old, chivalrous, [yet now] impoverished race" (21); however, it kills off other parts of Oliphant's construction of her mother by excluding certain "rough" details. For example, Coghill cut this description: "She had also I am bound to admit it, a great contempt for my father's family of whom I never knew anything, but from whose side we got all our bad qualities. The Wilson constitution, as she once said, in a moment of fervour, being a compound of 'vitriol and vinegar'" (22). She also cut the second sentence of the following passage, which contains a remark about women's undergarments that would have shocked and offended "respectable" genteel readers: "She was a poor woman all her life, but her instinct was always to give. I have seen her take off a warm garment of her own (that is euphemistic, but to say the plain truth it was a flannel petticoat!) to give it to a poor woman" (22). Oliphant's "plain truth" here makes visible her mother's removal of her underwear, no doubt on a cold day, so that she can help a poor woman to keep warm; such "exposure" of her mother through material, indeed bodily detail, says much more about her mother's character (and Oliphant's!) than any of the passages Coghill let stand. The "roughness" of such a risque act by Oliphant's mother and the "roughness" of Oliphant's exposure of that act explode the mythical, normative construction of these women's subjectivities created by Coghill. Readers can

hardly view either woman as a genteel Victorian "Angel" after such a description.

Coghill also excised "rough" details concerning the bitter fights that ensued between Oliphant's mother and Oliphant's husband, Frank, when the family moved from Scotland to London in 1852. One passage in particular is worth quoting at length because it demonstrates that, while Coghill left in the general sense that Oliphant's mother and husband did not get along, she cut "rough" details extensively in an effort to maintain her genteel, "respectable" construction of Oliphant. Perhaps no other passage in the *Autobiography* undermines Coghill's image of Oliphant so extensively because it exposes Oliphant's "respectable" domestic sphere as a site of intense negative emotions, verbal arguments, alcoholism, and extreme family discordance. The men Oliphant describes in the passage--her husband, her father, and her brother--are all presented negatively; they are, as Oliphant constructs them, the cause of the problems in the home, and they are clearly to be blamed for their weaknesses. Her mother is portrayed, on the other hand, in positive, sympathetic terms: as "poor bright, thwarted, wasted Love incarnate" (37). Coghill left very little of the passage stand--only a few sentences. I italisize the small portion of the passage that she included in the *Autobiography and Letters* to emphasize the extent of her editing:

> *Our house in Harrington Square was very near [my parents']: it looked all happy enough but was not, for my husband and my mother did not 'get on'* as people say. His mind was full of the foolish ideas about a mother-in-law, and thus, I fear, of a jealousy often touched with little darts of movements towards them which might have brought about something better if they had been responded to. But they were not. *My father sat passive, taking no notice, with his paper, not perceiving much I believe,* and poor Willie, tucked in the study that had been made for him, copying for me, reading old books, smoking and something worse than smoking, while she, poor mother, poor bright, thwarted, wasted Love incarnate as she was, lived between her daughter, who was taken from her, and her son, who was an anguish to her. To think of this in the house that looked so tranquil in this life that might have been sweet tranquility for once, parted from [her son] Frank, the other habitual companion, and with nothing but shame and misery in the thought of poor Willie, makes my heart ache, though she has been at rest so long. And this was the end of her striving and hoping and working for us. I, for my part, was torn in two. I have gone through many sorrows since, but I don't know that any period of my life has ever contained more intolerable moments than those first years that should have been so happy. *My child's birth made a momentary gleam of joy soon lost in* angry *clouds* and then another year, Willie growing worse. The silent (not always silent) conflict over me growing stronger, coming to a horrible breach, which I was almost glad of because it kept those two, the nearest to me, from meeting, while I stole to her daily though she never crossed my doors. Thus she *[My mother] became ailing and concealed it, and kept alive--or at least kept her last illness off by sheer stress of will until my second child was born a year and a day after the first.* There had been some reconciliation before that event for *she was with me, but sank next day into an illness from which she never rose. She died in September 1854.* . . . (36-37)

With this passage, Oliphant constructs the domestic scene as one that "*looked* all happy," "*looked* so tranquil" (emphasis mine) on the surface--a genteel, "respectable"

surface--but underneath was not. Coghill retained only this "look" of respectability by cutting all the "roughness" from the passage: Frank's "foolish ideas about a mother-in-law," his "jealousy," the "angry clouds" created by his fights with Oliphant's mother, by that "not always silent . . . conflict" with her over his wife, the way those fights concluded in "a horrible breach" forcing Mrs. Wilson from the house, forcing the daughter to have to "st[eal] to her [mother] daily"; Willie's "smoking and something worse than smoking" (his alcoholism), which brought "anguish," "shame and misery" to Oliphant's mother; and perhaps most significant, the way in which Oliphant "was taken from her [mother]," the way in which these two women were separated by the men of the family. The men are clearly to blame for this separation, as they are for the sad condition of Oliphant's mother, "Love incarnate as she was," whose life could "have been sweet tranquility," but was instead "thwarted" and "wasted." Oliphant does not "kill off" her mother in order to write; rather, she constructs her through writing as a strong woman with great potential who was "killed off" by the men of their family, by the "bad qualities," the "'vitriol and vinegar'" (22), of the male line. And Oliphant constructs her own marriage, with its "first years that should have been so happy," as "contain[ing] more intolerable moments" than "any [other] period of [her] life"--hardly the "respectable" institution

with its "Angel in the House" that Coghill would have it. Thus, Coghill had to excise these "intolerable moments" from Oliphant's text, for these moments soiled the "look" of domestic respectability she created for Oliphant.

In order to maintain that "look," that angelic, "womanly" appearance of Oliphant, Coghill's extensive editing also included cuts of extremely "rough," caustic remarks that Oliphant makes throughout the *Autobiography*. As with the passage I cited above, Coghill often let stand small portions of a passage, excising larger sections containing these "rough" elements, thus distorting the message of the passage altogether. An excellent example is Oliphant's description of George Eliot's marriage. Coghill presents it as follows: "And though her marriage is not one that most of us would have ventured on, still it seems to have secured her a worshipper unrivalled" (7). The original passage read: "And though her marriage, so called, is not one that most of us would have ventured on, still it seems to have secured her a caretaker and worshipper unrivalled--little nasty body though he looked, and hideous in nastiness as his previous story was" (17). Clearly, the "positive" description Coghill provides excises the "nastiness" of Oliphant's original remarks on how "nasty" G. H. Lewes was, and thus how "nasty" Eliot's "so called" marriage was.

Oliphant's "nastiness" represents more than her un"womanly" ability to be harshly critical of others,

however; it constitutes a move on Oliphant's part to expose the respectable "look" of the genteel domestic scene as just that--a facade--and it is a move similar to the one evidenced by the passage above on her own family life. It is also a move to discredit a rival writer with whom Oliphant often compares herself, one who received far greater acclaim and monetary remuneration for her work. Jay points out in a note on the Eliot/Lewes passage that

> in her review of Cross's *Life of George Eliot* . . . Oliphant hints that G. H. Lewes had been a roué, familiar with 'all the lowest scenes of London life', before he embarked upon bourgeois 'domestic bliss' in his liaison with George Eliot. She also comments at length upon the irony of a woman who had offended in a way not permitted to a duchess or dressmaker adopting the role of 'a great moral teacher'. (164)

Thus, this caustic, rather snide remark on George Eliot's marriage is linked to Oliphant's exposé of the hypocrisy of genteel respectability; after all, despite the "roughness" of George Eliot's life, her "respectable" readers found her a suitable, indeed a "'great moral teacher.'" Coghill excised Oliphant's judgment of Eliot's "so called" marriage, and thus excised the irony of the following statement which she let stand: "No one will even mention me in the same breath with George Eliot. And that is just" (17).[29]

Oliphant's caustic remarks on Leslie Stephen were similarly excised. However, Oliphant presents herself as

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[29] This passage may very well exemplify what Bakhtin refers to as the "exceptional role of tone" (*Speech* 154).

respecting Stephen enough, unlike George Eliot, to consider him her "friend." She states that "[t]here is no reason in these matters" (149) and explains that Stephen "is a cantankerous person and has not a good word for anybody, yet he has a fascination which is more effective than any amount of goodness" (149). Thus, while one could view Oliphant's remarks on George Eliot as evidence that Oliphant constructs herself as a "respectable," morally outraged woman (a reading not quite plausible given Oliphant's rather petty, even catty tone), her description of Stephen makes clear that she can respect a person *despite* his or her "morality." Her remarks on Eliot thus appear even doubly "nasty"; they clearly stem from Oliphant's jealousy over Eliot's greater professional (and material) success, for she uses a "moral" standard for Eliot that she does not apply to Stephen. While she judges Stephen for his atheism, she says, "I don't mean that he is not good" (149). She then goes on to explain his character, using extremely harsh language:

> Not an amiable man by any means, not thinking well of his neighbors, given to putting in a keen little stab as of a penknife quietly, a penknife with a fine edge. . . . I have always said of him that he is one of the men who are angry with God for not existing . . . angry for that failure, never satisfied, restless and eager to put out this discontent on anybody or anything . . . on account of his own perversity and obtuseness. (149-50)

Coghill cut these remarks, leaving only a more positive discussion of Oliphant's relationship with Stephen and how they "had become friends" (149). In the case of Oliphant's

friendship with Christina Rogerson--an "immoral," "scandalous" woman by Victorian standards who was implicated in the famous divorce case involving Sir Charles Dilke (Williams 196)--Coghill cuts out the friendship altogether by excising an entire page and a half (139-41) dealing with Rogerson. Oliphant, despite the scandal, refers to Rogerson as "my dear friend" (139), and reveals, "I am in her house now" (140), writing the *Autobiography*. Coghill no doubt removed this section of the text because in it Oliphant discloses the fact that she often "ha[s] a feeling of affection for people whom [she] should not in the least welcome with pleasure" (140), in other words, people who are "rough" and "highly immoral" (140) in the eyes of "respectable" society. Given this disclosure, her condemnation of George Eliot appears even more spiteful, perhaps even crude.

In some instances, the cuts Coghill made are almost comical in the extent to which they change the meaning of Oliphant's remarks, especially those dealing with so-called "respectable" members of society. An excellent example occurs with Oliphant's description of the "respectable" Hawtreys, "a family of old brothers and sisters, relatives of the old Provost Hawtrey of Eton, a very characteristic household" (123). Oliphant says of them in the manuscript, "They were all kind, much so naturally, a good deal more so fictitiously" (123)--a statement typical of Oliphant's

caustic wit, a wit she often wields against those people "characteristic" of the "respectable" upper middle class. Coghill's revision reads: "They were all kind naturally" (113). Here Coghill obviously removes all traces of Oliphant's caustic wit. And in instances where Coghill let some of that wit stand, she reduces it to a softer level. For example, Oliphant describes a Mr. Fullom, "whose acquaintance as an eminent literary man and great notability" she believed "it would be a fine thing to make" (39-40). She explains her disappointment, however, when "[h]e turned out a very small personage indeed, a fat solemn man, with a common little wife, people whom it was marvellous to think of as connected with anything that pretended to be intellectual" (40). Coghill softens the remark to read, "He turned out a very small personage indeed, a solemn man, with a commonplace wife, people whom it was marvellous to think of as intellectual" (35).

Such softening of Oliphant's self-construction was indeed necessary for Coghill to support the "womanly" image she creates for Oliphant in her Preface to the *Autobiography and Letters*. After all, remarks on how "fat" (40), "fictitiously" kind (123), or "hideous in nastiness" (17), in "perversity and obtuseness" (150) people are do not fit in well with the image of a woman who "had an exquisite daintiness in all her ways and in the very atmosphere about her which was 'pure womanly'" (xx). The editorial

reshapings Coghill had to use to fit Oliphant into this corset of domestic respectability were thus rather drastic. Unfortunately, these drastic maneuvers were repeated by critics for nearly one hundred years. Even Williams, whose biography of Oliphant comes far closer to Oliphant's own self-construction than does Coghill's edited text, occasionally employs these maneuvers. For example, she judges Oliphant's mother as responsible for the problems in her daughter's marriage: "Mrs Wilson [was] constantly coming to the house" (21); "[b]asically [Margaret] did not want to leave Frank, but for a time she could not conceal her hostility, and she had certainly picked up her mother's unspoken message that [Frank] was not good enough for her" (22).

Williams sometimes cuts out, in Coghill-like fashion, half of Oliphant's remarks, thus changing their meaning significantly. For example, she explains Frank's death using only some of Oliphant's words, while the ones she does not use give a very different impression of Oliphant's feelings. Williams writes, "Frank died on 20 October 1859, 'quite conscious, kissing me when his lips were already cold'. He was just forty-one" (32). The entire passage from which she quotes reads:

> Frank died quite conscious, kissing me when his lips were already cold, and quite, quite free from anxiety, though he left me with two helpless children and one unborn, and very little money, and no friends but the Macphersons, who were as good to me as brother and sister; but had no power

> to help beyond that, if anything could be beyond that. (78)

The second half of this passage is particularly bitter and undercuts the (morbid?) romanticism of the first half. It also emphasizes the extremely precarious financial position Oliphant's husband left her in. He was "free from anxiety," she implies, when he should not have been, given that position.

Williams also tends to repeat a judgment of Oliphant made by some of her contemporaries. In both the edited and unedited versions of the *Autobiography*, Oliphant focuses a great deal on money and debt. She says, for example, "I made on the whole a large income--and spent it, taking no great thought of the morrow. Yes, taking a great deal of thought of the morrow in the way of constant work and constant undertaking of whatever kind of work came to my hand" (136). Coghill, however, cut the next sentence, one which could, ironically, apply to Williams: "Perhaps I say all this because I have been assailed from a very unlikely quarter with furious upbraidings as to my extravagance which made me very wroth and very sore--and so feel the need of defending myself" (136). Coghill also cut this similar remark: "One cruel man the other day told me that I had ruined my family by my indulgence and extravagance" (79). Like this "cruel man," Williams judges Oliphant for living in an upper-middle-class style, a lifestyle which, unlike that of her upper-middle-class sisters, who were merely born

or married into it, she earned through extremely hard work, "constant work" (136), which, she reveals in the *Autobiography*, kept her up "very late . . . always until two in the morning" (134). Williams comments, for example, on Oliphant's hiring of servants when she was working on her own in early widowhood to support her three small children: "Perhaps *extravagantly*, she hired a cook and housemaid to live in" (37, emphasis mine). She says that when travelling Oliphant "ke[pt] her companions going in her usual *lavish* style with meat, wine and champagne" (46, emphasis mine) and that "she spent money *lavishly* when she had it" (99, emphasis mine). Such actions would probably not be termed "extravagant" or "lavish" on the part of women born into the upper middle class.

Williams also tends, as did many of Oliphant's contemporaries, to judge Oliphant for having sent her sons to Eton; while she explains that, due to the success of the Carlingford series, Oliphant "thought that she could risk it" (88), she also says that "Story, and probably other friends, warned her that she was making a mistake" (88). And while Oliphant's sons did have difficulty finding jobs without the proper upper-class connections, Oliphant reveals in the excised portions of the *Autobiography* that other factors were involved: "the wandering and the erring" (51) on Cyril's part--his tendency always to go "out to the Club at night" (52)--and Cecco's ill health. She explains,

> [their] education has not come to much in any case--my Tiddy, God forgive and bless him, partly by his own fault, my Cecco by the long burden of illness which has kept him back, have not achieved those high hopes which I seemed so fully justified in forming. They were well-equipped and beyond the average in ability, both, but did nothing to verify this to the world. (79-80)

Oliphant's "high hopes" for her sons were indeed "fully justified." She had every right to aspire to a higher class position, for them and for herself, and she should not be blamed for the fact that she could not, through her "constant work" (136), purchase the "cultural capital" of connections for her sons. She claims that she was "very faulty in their education [in this respect], but what was wrong was done in love and not wrongly meant" (82), then explains, "no one ever helped me" (82); "my sons [were] born and bred and tended all their lives by me, no-one else doing anything for them" (81).

Indeed, no one--at least no one of the middle or upper class--ever did "help" Margaret Oliphant very much, not in the raising of her sons or her other children, including those she "adopted," not in the supporting of her numerous other dependents, not in the writing of her literary works. Only her servants, whom Oliphant mentions frequently in the *Autobiography* and gives credit to for their work, truly helped her. Yet Oliphant helped so many. In fact, she even wrote the *Autobiography* itself, once Cecco died, "consciously for the public, with the aim (no evil aim) of leaving a little more money for Denny" (95). And while this

writing for the public felt for her at first "so vulgar, so common, so unnecessary, as if it were making pennysworth of [herself]" (95), she concludes, "if it does make poor Denny more comfortable and independent, what does it matter?" (95). Coghill cut from this passage all of the detail about Denny, all of the classed and gendered detail on why the text itself was even being written, perhaps because Oliphant's "what does it matter" reveals how little the Victorian norm of genteel "womanly" respectability mattered to Oliphant, how little it could matter given her particular gender, class, and ethnic subjectivity.

In its unedited form, the *Autobiography* makes evident the extreme difficulties Oliphant faced as a single woman with numerous dependents, yet it also makes clear the strength and determination with which she met those difficulties. Because the text emphasizes important gendered, classed, and ethnic aspects of her subjectivity, it allows for a deconstruction of the Oliphant legend created by Coghill and her "pious but misguided efforts" (Jay xv). However, it is the responsibility of critics not to overlook those aspects, not to render them as invisible as Coghill did when she removed them from the text. The effacement of the multiplicity of Oliphant's subjectivity that has occurred in the criticism is indicative of a larger problem in the academy. The case of Margaret Oliphant, I would argue, is merely one example of scholars, including

feminists, taking part in the perpetuation of restrictive notions of gender, class, and ethnicity which thrive in the academy through a set of research and interpretive practices. What passes for acceptable, indeed "respectable," research, often colludes with the normalization of subjectivity in our culture which requires that difference be either ignored altogether or viewed as a "roughness" to be, if not destroyed completely, then at least smoothed over and rendered invisible. Even the extensive work of feminist scholars in theorizing, reconstructing, and revising the literary canon has often failed to include, and thus has rendered invisible, the multiplicity of subjectivities represented and constructed by women writers such as Oliphant.

In an effort to have Oliphant fit a "respectable" construction of womanhood, as well as to please her contemporaries, Coghill deleted the "rough" aspects of Oliphant's *Autobiography* during the editing process. As Jay asserts, and a comparison of the edited and unedited versions of the *Autobiography* has demonstrated, that process "colluded with the constraints imposed upon women and women writers by the cultural assumptions enshrined in the market" (ix). Similarly, I would argue that the theoretical and critical process which reinscribed and perpetuated the Oliphant legend has "colluded with the constraints imposed upon women and women writers by the cultural assumptions

enshrined in the" academy. Those "cultural assumptions" constitute, in both cases, a hidden agenda which must be rendered visible, for that agenda perpetuates dangerous classist, sexist, heterosexist, and ethnocentric attitudes that are cloaked under the normative veil of "respectability." Like Oliphant, we must expose the "look" of that "respectability."

CHAPTER 5
TELLING TALES AND "PLACING OUR BODIES IN THE WAY": MATERIALIZING WORKING-CLASS VICTORIAN WOMEN'S SUBJECTIVITY

> *We dealt with hunger. We dealt with cold. We were the ones who held things together.* Knit one, purl two. *We were the ones who, after working all day, made the meals.* And the beginning. *We made sure everybody ate.* And the end. . . . *And the way we thought grew from what we did.* And the end and the beginning. *We were the ones who nursed the dying through death.* The wheel. *The ones who birthed, who had blood on our hands . . . and tended the fire that cooked the stew.* The double ax. *These labors shaped our thinking. We were the ones who watched the wearing down and the daily mending and did what had to be done with the lost. We were the ones who knew what it all meant. Each breath. The cost. The years. We knew the limits.* Gravity. *And what had to be done.* The pull. *Our hands made decisions we knew had to be made.* The motion. *[W]hen there was no more caring, when there was no more food.* The end and the beginning. *Our bodies knew loss.* The circle. *Our bodies knew limitation. . . .* The gravitational pull. *Our limbs made the decision to move . . . .* Knit one, purl two. *We were the ones who held things together.* Purl two, knit one. *And we were the ones who unraveled the patterns. Who refused to move.* The centrifugal force. *We were the ones who resisted. We were the ones who decided this can go on no longer, and placed our bodies in the way. . . .* (Griffin 188-89)

How do I begin writing about working-class Victorian women's subjectivity? About working-class Victorian women's writing? How *can* I begin? I keep placing my body in the way, placing it here to perform this work, yet nothing in my experience has prepared me for this--an academic, "theoretically sophisticated analysis" of these "texts," which of course must include a rigorous "close reading."

Nothing has prepared me. Not all the years of graduate education, not the travel grant I received to do research in London on working-class Victorian women's fiction and autobiography, not the hundreds of pages of hand-written notes I took on the dozens of literary works I read. Nothing at all. But something *does* tell me that this "rough" beginning for a chapter is wholly inappropriate, dangerous even--that it is not a "respectable" way to introduce a scholarly text. And that "something" is a voice, behind which looms the force of a thousand different voices, not at all the "Angel in the House" Virginia Woolf speaks of, although the outcome is the same--a stultifying conformity to what is expected, and if not, banishment, whether before or after entering these "hallowed" halls. For there is no "angel" in the house of academia; in fact, this voice is not "*in* the house" at all, but rather in its very structure. And these walls don't need ears--they don't need a concrete, visible means of monitoring who enters, who remains--not when the voices that speak do so from within those of us who contemplate such an entrance. A veritable Foucauldian panopticon--for you see, I can speak the language; I can walk down these halls. And as long as I remain silent in terms of my class position, I can hear myself think above the voices. But the moment I come close to vocalizing my working-class subjectivity, the voices grow louder, as they're doing now. They tell me that this

"rough" beginning is not "respectable"--But, they say, we asked you to speak about working-class Victorian women's fiction and constructions of subjectivity--what has that got to do with your working-class identity?

I will try to explain.

My body keeps placing itself in the way.

You see, I spent more years laboring in a nursing home kitchen than I have in graduate school. And those years were longer, took up and continue to take up more space, like the workdays that began then at 5:30 in the morning and ended fourteen hours later at 7:30 at night. *These labors shaped our thinking.* Even now I return to work there on most nights--in my dreams, where there is no other employment for me, even with a Ph.D. and seven years of teaching experience. *We made sure everybody ate. . . . and tended the fire that cooked the stew.* Or I dream of being back in high school to receive the diploma I never earned. I "dropped" out[1]--there was no one left to take care of my father. *We were the ones who nursed the dying through death.* Or to take care of me. I dream of being a child again, standing in welfare lines for foodstamps; in lines at the city hospital's Medicaid clinic, waiting for the doctors to fix the pain in my chest. *Our bodies knew loss.* I dream

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[1] Actually, I was "pushed" out. See my discussion in Chapter Two of the way in which certain rhetoric, such as "drop out," covers up the material class "realities" that force students out of school.

of being trapped in institutions--hospitals, schools--where I am experimented on, where I can't leave without paying, or at least without producing my high school diploma. And I always know that without it they will take away my Bachelor's, my Master's, the Ph.D., and they will never let me leave. *We were the ones who knew what it all meant.* No matter that I worked for them, as a secretary, as a T.A., always for poverty level wages. That I lived in cold, run-down apartments, and went without eating when my student loans or state paychecks were late--yet maintained a perfect 4.0 grade point average. *We dealt with hunger. We dealt with cold. We were the ones who held things together.* No matter that in graduate school I was back in those hospital clinics, still waiting. When my lung collapsed, my heart failed, my body hemorrhaged. *Each breath.* When those years that were longer caught up to me more than in dreams. *The cost. The years.*

So how *can* I write about working-class Victorian women's subjectivities, about working-class Victorian women's fiction? I will try to explain. I am only writing now, at this moment, because *I kn[o]w the limits. . . . And what ha[s] to be done*--because *[my hands have] made the decision to move.* And because it is the first time in over sixteen years that I have not "worked." I am finally on a fellowship. Yet I was nearly killed in order to make it here, where I "do not work." When I applied for the

fellowship, I was slowly dying from carbon monoxide poisoning. Unknown to me at the time, the run-down apartment where I lived (and still live) had a natural gas leak so large that the place should have blown up. Every gas appliance was leaking. The doctors said I probably had multiple sclerosis, yet I had no medical insurance--they would not do the proper tests without it. So for months, until the leaks were discovered and repaired, I woke up most mornings with the room spinning, blacking out most days, going blind sometimes for several minutes at a time, my arms and legs going numb, my heart palpitating, my muscles spasming, and still I wrote a prospectus for this dissertation, I applied for a fellowship. And I survived. So here I am writing, resisting, deciding that *this can go on no longer*. I am placing my body in the way.

I will try to explain.

I am writing not only for myself, but for all my working-class "sisters," and for my mother, who pointed out to me just last night that I myself never really was "working class":

"What are ya talkin' about, 'working class'? Your father didn't work, not when you were young. He was already worked out, used up. We were poor, on welfare, on your dad's disability. Where did ya get *working* class?"

"I guess you're right, ma. I guess I just figured that 'cause I started work at fourteen in that kitchen, because *I*

worked, that we were working class. How funny. Here I am--the big class scholar--and I don't even get my own class right. I forgot that I *had* to work that young--all us kids did--because you and dad were so sick."

"Yeah, sick from workin'." She laughs. "Ha! Working class. We were *under* class."

I will try to explain.

When I first tried to write about working-class Victorian women's texts, it was in the form of a colloquium paper. In this paper I was to present a close reading of the works of the women writers I had researched in London on a fellowship grant.[2] I had written only a few pages, when my mother called, and commented on my being home on a Friday night.

"You're workin', no doubt. Of course, my daughter's workin'. You're *always* workin'. What is it this time? That proposal for the women's conference?"

"No, mom, it's the paper for the colloquium. You know, the paper on the research I did in London."

"Colloquium? I don't know that word. What is it?"

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[2] In August of 1993 I received a $2,500 travel grant from the University of Florida's Department of English to research working-class Victorian women's fiction and autobiography at the British Library. Without the grant I would not have been able to afford the trip. In fact, I had to work twice as many hours the first part of the summer just to be able to afford to take the three weeks off from work necessary for travelling.

I take a deep breath, sigh, then take another deep breath. The effort is almost relief: "Well, mom, it's this kinda thing where all these fuddy dud academics sit around a big table with their lunches in brown paper bags, and some honored academic, who's *supposed* to be some kinda expert on somethin' that all the academics think is some big deal, well, he goes blah, blah, blah, reading his paper, and they all ask questions and such, then it's all over, and well, that's about it."

"So it's kinda like 'conference,' right? They got 'academy,' then it's 'academician,' and then 'symposium,' right? So now it's 'colloquium'--'academician,' 'symposium,' 'colloquium.' They just keep makin' up those words, don't they?" She laughs.

"Yes, mom, they do. That's *all* they do."

And as she tells me about her latest scheme to make a few dollars (she's on a fixed income--$400.00 a month disability; "if 'they' find out 'they'll' take it away"), as she tells me all this I type the colloquium conversation. I am split, moving back and forth between writing the paper and talking to my mother--responding to all her endless material details, how much this costs, how much that costs; how much, how much, how much . . . .

How much *can* I say about working-class Victorian women's fiction and constructions of subjectivity? And what will be the cost of what I say? That words have a cost--

that they have a material reality--that they, along with that material reality, create subjectivity--that subjectivity itself is complex, relational, heterogeneous--that it is constructed through language, which is itself stratified, multiplicitous, in flux, as is subjectivity--finally, I am arriving at my "subject."[3] But is it really mine? If so, it's only because no one else in the academy *wanted* it, at least not anyone privileged enough to act on their desire for it. But perhaps desire is not the only factor. Perhaps there are middle- and upper-class critics --male and female--interested in the "subject," yet they are either unwilling or unable to risk taking it up, for focusing on such minor, noncanonical women writers poses many dangers, not the least of which involves the need to publish and achieve tenure in our profession. Focusing on such writers could lead to a professional "life" spent laboring in dead-end, adjunct positions,[4] if not to a professional death altogether. But to focus only on middle-class women writers would result in an even earlier professional death for me: I could never finish the Ph.D. under such conditions; I would have to "kill off" too much

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[3] I provide extensive discussion of subjectivity and class in Chapters One, Two, and Three.

[4] Given the numbers of Ph.D.s in the field who are already relegated to such a fate, despite having done their work on more "respectable," accepted writers, the "choice" of writers to focus upon becomes even more restricted; in fact, one could argue that "choice" is not even really possible.

of myself (and poverty has already done enough of that). Such scholarly work would be too irrelevant, even traitorous--to my spirit, my psyche, my body, my emotions, as well as to the working-class community that I will *never* leave behind. So the "subject" is mine out of necessity, because I have placed my body in the way, because I am doing what has to be done.

Yet such resistance feels dangerous and frightening. After all, were I to begin this chapter in the conventional, indeed "respectable," fashion, I certainly would not include the "rough," very personal, material and bodily details that I have; and thus I would not hear the voices of the academy, with their accusing tone--"You're being so melodramatic, so self-indulgent, so improper and unprofessional."[5] Instead,

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[5] I argue in Chapters One and Two that such "voices" in the academy derive from a "normalization" of subjectivity prevailing in our culture, a process requiring us to attain "respectability" through adherence to mythical norms. As Benjamin DeMott explains in his book *The Imperial Middle: Why Americans Can't Think Straight About Class*, our culture perpetuates a "myth of classlessness" (11), a myth that in the United States we all really belong to (or have access to) one "imperial middle" class. I argue that those who are not part of this "middle"--marginalized groups such as the poor and working classes--are constructed by certain discourses of the academy as having *chosen* to reject membership in this all-encompassing middle due to morality or criminality ("roughness"), and not material circumstances. Classist academic "voices" translate the material experiences of the poor and working classes (including those who manage to make it into the academy) into a "roughness," which can then be cast aside as "melodramatic, self-indulgent, improper and unprofessional." As Paula Treichler points out, even some liberal and left critics use similar rhetoric to prevent academics, working-class ones included, "from writing about themselves"; such writing is, they claim, "too bourgeois, . . . too self-

I would begin in a normative way by pointing out that a gap exists in literary scholarship on the Victorian Period, that if one looks for working-class Victorian women's fiction in the current literary criticism, one most likely will not find it.[6] I certainly would not mention my own class position, at least not by detailing its "grotesque" "realities,"[7] nor would I say in an angry, bitter tone that even with the race, class, and gender trend; that even with feminist criticism, marxist criticism (now cultural-materialist criticism), new-historicism, and any other "ism" that roams the halls of the academy (and perhaps *due to* a few more "isms" we're not quite so proud of--racism, classism, sexism); that even with all of our politically correct, highly sophisticated, powerfully potent, oh-so-theoretical approaches to literature, we've somehow missed the existence of working-class Victorian women's fiction. Such anger would not be allowed--it would be too "unprofessional."

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indulgent" (Fiske 167). Ironically, when that writing becomes too graphic, it then is no longer bourgeois *enough;* it no longer conforms to a construction that Bakhtin terms the "classic" body.

[6] See Chapter Three for a more "normative" discussion of issues of canon formation, especially the exclusion of working-class Victorian women's fiction.

[7] I am referencing here Bakhtin's "grotesque" body. See my discussion in Chapter Two of the connections between this "low," material body and lower-class mannerisms and behaviors.

So I would speak, instead, with a bit more restraint, noting that we *have* managed to discover Hannah Cullwick's diaries, and that Reginia Gagnier's book, *Subjectivities: A History of Self-Representation in Britain, 1832-1920*, does an excellent job of examining subjectivity and working-class autobiography, both men's and women's, but I would insist that when it comes to working-class women's *fiction*,[8] we come up with very little. A reference here and there is all we'll find, and perhaps an explanation for the absence--Paul Lauter's comment, for instance, his two-sentence comment in his article, "Working-class Women's Literature: An Introduction to Study." These two sentences are all he has to say about the subject: "For British working-class fiction, I know of no study equivalent to Martha Vicinus', which concentrates on ballads, broadsides, music-hall songs, and working-class poetry. But it is likely that in Britain, as in the United States, most such work is issued by feminist and radical journals and publishing houses and has simply not found its way into libraries here" (844). And so, even if the scholarship is out there, it is not easy to find, and certainly not in libraries. And one needs *money*

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[8] I point out in Chapter Three that the fiction of Victorian working-class *men* has been recognized and studied to a certain extent, and I explain that this gender-specific focus relates to a restrictive definition of the Victorian working-class: one that excludes a heterogeneity of working-class subjectivity by emphasizing primarily male industrial workers, Chartists, and labor activists.

to purchase the journals and books, if one can even learn of their existence, that is, if they even exist.

And then there is the problem of definition. What exactly constitutes the Victorian "working class"? Class subjectivity is extremely complex;[9] however, I must delineate to a certain extent what constitutes "working class" and what constitutes "middle class" or "bourgeois." But if, to make such a distinction in relation to working-class Victorian women fiction writers, I turn to historians writing on the subject, I find enormous differences of opinion. Most historians distinguish between "working class" and "middle class" by looking at several criteria such as occupation, income, and propertied status--the working class being defined as skilled and unskilled manual labourers who owned no property, and the middle class being "defined as the professions, proprietors of land and houses, manufacturers employing two or more hands, farmers and retailers" (Higgs 133) and the "labour aristocracy," or tradesmen who owned shops or employed workers--and also important is the criterion of whether or not the household employed a servant. Yet Edward Higgs points out that "a neat identification of servant employment and the middle classes is too simplistic" (133). Higgs' study points to a general problem with historical scholarship on class relations during the Victorian Period: oversimplification

[9] I explain this complexity at length in Chapter Three.

when drawing boundaries between the "middle" and the "working" classes.[10] The boundary between the classes was, in fact, extremely fluid and subject to a number of variables.[11]

Constructions of class that do *not* sufficiently take into account that class is a dynamic, fluid *relationship*, however, can result in rigid distinctions of class identity. One such distinction is the "respectable"/"rough" dichotomy, which was part of class subjectivity during the Victorian Period, and in particular, "working-class" subjectivity. Some historians and literary critics, when discussing this distinction, present all working-class Victorians as having a choice between two "extremes": bourgeois respectability and non-bourgeois roughness; and they argue that the distinction did not relate very much to "class" in terms of one's material circumstances.[12] But because subjectivity involves the subject as both subject to knowledge, such as

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[10] See Chapter Three for a more detailed discussion of this oversimplification.

[11] See Chapter Three for a discussion of these variables as they are examined by historians. For example, Royden Harrison calls into question Eric Hobsbawm's "'gulf, his contention concerning the sharply drawn frontier between aristocrats and plebians" of labour (3) because "[n]o such gulf emerges in any of the trades or callings" (4) which he and his colleagues examine in their book. Their analysis of trades such as cabinet-making and baking problematizes any easy distinction of certain tradesmen as "petit bourgeois," as does Benson's analysis of the working-class "penny capitalists."

[12] See Chapter Three for a more detailed discussion.

cultural values, and as a subject which is a body that is subject to the physical environment, separating values and material conditions when analyzing working-class subjectivity is highly problematic, as is simply conflating the two: neither theoretical strategy takes into account the ways in which these are relational. And this relationality demonstrates the complexity involved with class subjectivity, a complexity that historians and literary critics sometimes overlook. We ought to look at class as a relationship that falls upon a *continuum*.

This notion of a class continuum, especially as it relates to the politics of both canon formation and the academy, has helped me to formulate several questions: Why is it so excruciatingly difficult to do research on working-class Victorian women's fiction? Why hasn't anyone who has had the privileged position and the means to do so begun this work? Answering these questions is not difficult. It is easy to figure out why even middle- and upper-class Victorian women writers, except for the token few such as George Eliot and Charlotte Brontë, did not make it into the canon until recently (if they're even there now, except on a trendy, temporary basis). We need only read Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* or look at how little power women have had (until quite recently) in the academy to understand why women have been so under-represented in the canon; part (certainly not all) of that power involves the

material resources necessary to bring women writers into the canon--grants, fellowships, and secure, well-paid positions. For some reason (and this belies the poststructuralist "death of the author"--whether s/he be the author of literature or literary criticism) the class identities represented by the literary canon to some extent are in direct relation to the identities represented by the academy in terms of who has tenure. I say "to some extent" because now that the race, class, gender trend has become so "profitable" in the "knowledge factory," some of those with the most power are beginning to bring these works into the canon for their own benefit, and certainly *not* for the benefit of those whose identities are represented by the works themselves.

Indeed, the number of *women* in materially privileged positions in the academy has not been and still is not very great. In addition, the works of more canonical women writers are materially more accessible, as are the works of even minor middle-class women writers. Coupled with the restrictive notions of what constitutes "good literature" and the difficulties women have had moving into positions of power in the academy, it is certainly understandable that texts by working-class women, which probably would be considered even *less* valuable given the prevailing aesthetic standards of the academy, have received less attention from feminist critics. Annette Kolodny's point about the

"competing interpretive paradigms or reading techniques" (154) of the academy is relevant here. She argues that "*what* we read" is intricately tied up with these paradigms, with "*how* we have learned to read" (154). As she explains, "[w]hat we then choose to read--and, by extension, teach and thereby 'canonize'--usually follows upon our previous reading. Radical breaks are tiring, demanding, uncomfortable, and sometimes wholly beyond our comprehension" (154-5). The middle- and upper-class feminist literary critics who have done extensive work to bring minor middle-class Victorian women writers into the canon have had to make these "[r]adical breaks," have had to become "resisting readers," to use Judith Fetterley's term, working against the masculinist, patriarchal paradigms of reading that they have learned. They have not had, based upon their gender, a simple, unproblematic process of "reading as a woman"; as Jonathan Culler notes, "women can read, and have read, as men" (513). To bring these middle-class women writers into the canon, these feminist critics have had to "resist" reading "as men"--a "tiring, demanding, uncomfortable" process (Kolodny 155), as well as, I would argue, a *materially risky* process.[13]

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[13] For all of the rhetoric surrounding issues of multiculturalism, especially that propagated by the right-wing--feminists, gays, blacks etc. have "taken over" the academy (see my discussion of this rhetoric in Chapters One and Two)--women who choose to do research on minor women writers still take great risks in doing so in terms of securing tenure-track positions in literature departments.

In her article, "I'm Here: An Asian Woman's Response," Amy Ling points to a similar process of resisting in terms of race and gender. She describes her initial "alienation" and "self-alienation" upon reading another Chinese American woman writer--alienation that resulted from her training in "the 'malestream'" of "the traditional classics of Western European and American literature" (739)--and the "resisting" process she underwent in order to learn to value and feel "at home" with Chinese American and other Asian American women writers. She did not "read as a Chinese American woman" simply because of her raced and gendered subjectivity. She explains that her "resistance" involved formulating, following Jane Tompkins, a new definition of "literature," one "broader than the 'stylistic intricacy, psychological subtlety, [and] epistemological complexity" that is the current measure of a 'good' book, and examin[ing] instead 'how and why it worked for its readers, in its time'" (742). Ling formulated a set of "resisting" questions: "Good for what? For whom? Under what circumstances?" (742). To bring working-class Victorian women writers into the canon would require a similar, difficult process: it would require us to "resist" "reading

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Given the current job market expectations that demand that most prospective professors teach a broad range of literature, proving that one can teach "canonical" texts is essential.

as bourgeois" or "middle class," learning, instead, to "read as working class."

I certainly do not want to participate in what Blanche Radford Curry refers to as an "Olympics of Oppression," which occurs when critics argue that one group of oppressed people (working-class Victorian women) ought to "win out" over some other group (middle-class Victorian women); *all* women are subject to sexist oppression in varying degrees and *all* women's subjectivities and experiences need to be voiced. I believe, however, that in the field of Victorian studies, we need to turn wholeheartedly to a different set of unrepresented women's voices and texts--those of working-class women and women of color. We are, of course, turning back to the middle- and upper-class white women's texts and discussing how they represent these women's privilege and their subsequent oppression of working-class women; certainly we must do this. And certainly there are material and paradigmatic issues involved with doing this. But we ought not to ignore the complexity of how oppression and privilege operate in women's subjectivities; we ought not to forget that oppression and privilege are relational, heterogeneous, contextual, both within an individual woman's subjectivity and among various women's subjectivities. We ought to be careful to note that forms of oppression do magnify one another, so that how a woman is oppressed by sexism is influenced by her oppression or privilege in terms

of other factors such as race, class, age, religion, etc. However, simply because a woman is privileged in several areas does not undo the fact that she is oppressed in another. We ought to look at as much of the entire picture as we can. And looking at this picture requires us to be "resisting readers" against many grains of gender, race, class, ethnicity and culture.

And here I arrive at my "subject" once more and the relation of all this talk of oppression and privilege to working-class Victorian women. (And I am consciously, even painfully aware of how far away I still am from that "subject," of how many pages I have spent bogged down in all these explanations of how I got there, how I still have not, despite a huge chunk of "respectable" academic discourse, presented one "nugget of pure truth" (Woolf 4) concerning working-class Victorian women's fiction. And I'm aware that the process of digging up that "nugget," mining for it, as my uncles mined for coal, is *not* what I am supposed to discuss here. In academia we usually hide the "rough" dirty process of digging about, and most certainly we hide our own "rough" identities; only that nugget counts.) But still the fact remains that given the current feminist scholarship, the identities of working-class Victorian women are still being represented through the texts of their "oppressors," and in this instance one particular group--middle- and upper-class Victorian women--although it is important that

we keep in mind that these women are also the "sisters" of working-class women in terms of certain shared forms of sexist oppression. The identities of working-class Victorian women are also represented not only by middle- and upper-class women's texts, but these texts (except for the tokenized ones chosen by men) have in turn been valued, examined, and discussed primarily by middle- and upper-class women academics. Thus, the representation of working-class Victorian women, as it has been presented by women, has occurred through the constructions of subjects privileged on a class axis. This does not mean that these constructions are inherently classist; however, that only such privileged women have controlled this particular means of production *is* certainly classist, just as the representation of women only through texts that are authored by men and in turn valued, examined, and discussed by men is sexist.

Thus, that we consider working-class identity as it is presented by working-class subjects is extremely important, especially if we are going to acknowledge the impact that privilege and oppression have upon us as "subjects"--whether that means subjects who write and study literature or criticism, or subjects of that literature and criticism. I am not arguing that working-class subjects, simply by virtue of their class position, are automatically "resisting," "working-class" readers of their culture; nor am I arguing that a working-class woman like myself can automatically,

because of my class and gender subjectivity, "read" as "working class," discovering the unproblematic "resistance" embedded in working-class Victorian women's texts. And yet I wish to claim that these writers and readers *can* contribute differently to what Kolodny defines as the feminist "desire to alter and extend what we take as historically relevant from out of that vast storehouse of our literary inheritance," out of that "resource for remodeling our literary history, past, present, and future" (153). I wish to claim some validity, or at least some *potential* validity, in the argument that Rosalinda Méndez González makes: that

> to see through the eyes of the women on the bottom, is to see not only the lives of the vast majority, but also to look upward through all levels of society; the flaws and contradictions of the upper classes and of the social structure they maintain become exposed from this perspective. The elite class perspective tends to be biased, myopic, and class-centered; the majority laboring class perspective tends to be more critical and encompassing. (32)

That "perspective" is not inherently "critical"; we are all subject to the dominant culture, and in the United States that *is* a bourgeois culture. However, dismissing as impossible any type of "working-class" culture is certainly problematic, as is dismissing any form of "working-class" reading, thus rendering all forms of reading inherently "bourgeois."

While the predominant stereotype of working-class people is that they are ignorant--that they lack political

and social awareness--having grown up poor, I remember the intensely *critical* voices of my relatives and friends. My own voice was critical, and from a very young age. A culture that says, "You are lazy, undeserving, worthy of only menial jobs, of going hungry, of freezing in the winter," *had* to be critiqued, *had* to be considered just plain "wrong," if I/we were to survive on any psychological or spiritual level. We had to deconstruct that voice. Perhaps we could not get out of our circumstances, but we didn't have to like them or agree that *we* were to blame. Many of us--black, white, Asian, hispanic--knew better by simple virtue of our material circumstances: we worked harder, tried harder, seemed kinder, more loving by far than our middle- and upper-class bosses. At sixteen, I was *not* an anomaly when I cornered the white, middle-class nursing home administrator--a woman[14]--and raged about her insensitivity, her coldness, when my friends, my co-workers, nearly died because of run-down equipment (one was severely shocked on the steam table, another--my friend Toni, in fact --barely escaped with five elderly patients from the elevator when it caught on fire). I, along with my co-workers, damn well knew that the owners of the nursing home could afford better equipment, higher wages, more staff--we saw the BMWs parked outside--we knew it was about making

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[14] This woman was a feminist, however; in Chapter Three I discuss the way she did support me when I was sexually harassed by a supervisor.

money for *them* at our expense. We ended up fighting for the right to unionize.

Many of us have strong union ties through our relatives, through our friends, through our simply driving home from work and seeing union workers picketing. When the teachers at my high school went on strike, we students supported them by *rioting*. We helped them bust the "scabs." We refused to attend school, and our parents supported that refusal. School ended up being suspended *for over three months* until the teachers' demands were met. We did not respect, we even hated most of our teachers--many had been abusively violent to us, had raped us, belittled us--but we loved and respected unions. Perhaps the history books have covered up labor union history, but *we* knew it because many of us had *lived* it. And we were critical, without being taught in school *how* to be critical. We had a way of reading that was not "bourgeois"; our lives taught us how to "unlearn"--if we even "learned" it in the first place--the bourgeois readings imposed upon us. I'm not saying that we didn't internalize our oppression, buy into it to some extent, but to believe it totally was to succumb to the point of death: "You are worthless," the dominant culture said. "Die," it said. Some of us did--my friends, many of them, in gang fights,[15] or from drug overdoses, or from

[15] Not all of the murders were gang-related, however. One of my friends--Doug, aged seventeen--died at the hands of an upper-middle-class man--aged twenty-four: the man

slitting their wrists; some died in prison, or from diseases, or from being raped and having coke bottles rammed up inside them.[16] Even I "died" once when I was sixteen: after being beaten by my boyfriend, who poured alcohol and pills down my throat because I refused to "party" with him, after the downstairs neighbors called the police, and they came, knocked my boyfriend out and raped me until I slipped into a coma, after the neighbors called an ambulance, I arrived "dead" at the hospital. But when I came out of the coma--"the return of the oppressed/repressed"?--I didn't believe the dominant culture: I knew that I deserved to live. It was either deconstruct or self-destruct (if no one else destroyed me first).

So even though I understand the *theoretical* problem with claiming that one's working-class identity impacts upon one's writing or one's reading, I have to claim a space for that writing and that reading. Not all of us are "illiterate." Some of us have learned to read differently--whether or not we have learned to read at all. While

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provoked a fight with Doug and then slit his throat in front of a teenaged witness. Even a decade later, what I and many people in my community remember most is not the murder itself but the injustice involved: the upper-middle-class man, because he hired expensive lawyers, received less punishment than many poor people are given for theft or bad cheques: a small fine and two years' probation.

[16] In this incident, a girlfriend of mine's best friend--a working-class girl from the coal region of Pennsylvania--was raped and murdered by two "college boys," who were never even punished: their fathers had money and political influence.

feminism may be essential to learning to "read as a woman" or to "write as a woman"--to understand, as Peggy Kamuf puts it, "a way of reading texts that points to the masks of truth with which phallocentrism hides its fictions" (286)--to be cognizant of one's class oppression, of "the masks of truth with which capitalism hides its fictions," may not require a theoretical/political form of learning acquired in, say, undergraduate or graduate education. As Barbara Smith and Beverly Smith point out, feminist reading may be for women that "click" that says, "Oh, I see. I'm oppressed," but the "click" for poor and working-class people is "so far back"--"[i]f you're poor it's a constant thing, everyday, everyday"; the "oppression is [so] extreme"--that we *know* we are oppressed (114). We don't need a way of reading--a "click"--to turn on our critical apparatus and tell us we are being screwed. Take, for example, the words of "a forty-year-old carpenter" cited by scholar Arthur Marwick, and notice how critically astute they are, perhaps more so than anything a degreed sociologist would come up with, and for obvious reasons:

> 'You got to be an idiot to believe them political commercials. It's money runs this country. Hell, even our welfare system is meant to give jobs to all them sociologists, bureaucrats, and political hacks. Welfare is a welfare system for the educated, upper middle class. That's what the liberal moaning for the poor is really about. It's for their own jobs. No politician is going to change that. Poverty is a going business.' (314)

This carpenter's deconstruction of "welfare"--that it is not really "meant" to help the poor, but rather "to give jobs to . . . the upper middle class," that *they* are the ones who benefit the most--is very astute given the material "realities" of those on welfare: after all, it does *not* provide decent housing, medical care, education, food--and women cannot even purchase "luxuries" like toilet paper, tampons, and diapers with food stamps--let alone the means with which to rise from poverty. Of course, I would not argue that it should therefore be abolished completely, as the Gingrich agenda seems to contend; rather, the capitalist incentives involved need to be recognized, as well as *who* benefits from such incentives and how Victorian codes of respectability and roughness play a part. For example, Stanley Arnowitz points out that there is a "conjunction of one view of the American Dream of individual mobility and self-reliance with the now widely held belief that only the 'deserving poor' should be entitled to public housing and free medical and child care services" (423); these "deserving poor" seem very much like the "respectable" poor of the Victorian era--hard working, non alcohol or drug using, married, Christian, etc. And women are often the casualties of this Victorian standard. Gingrich's plan to cut off aid to unmarried *women* with children, for example, fits perfectly with Victorian standards of respectability. And if one follows Victorian codes, then one need not

remember that a capitalist society *requires* a minimum 5 to 6 percent unemployment rate; there can be no real "deserving poor" in this category, for only those who work are deserving.

Indeed, if there is a "feminization of poverty," as many feminists note, there is a corresponding "masculinization" and "capitalization" of poverty. After all, it is *men* of the upper middle and upper classes who make the huge profits from building subsidized housing projects or securing other government-funded contracts, for example, or who receive the large salaries of those high up in the welfare bureaucracy. Women, on the other hand, who "constitute the overwhelming majority of social-welfare program recipients and employees" (Fraser 447), are clearly not benefitting to anything like the same degree--their "profits" are meager at best; most of these welfare employees work in human services positions that pay working-class to lower-middle class wages. This working-class carpenter's critique of the welfare system as a profit-making industry is, therefore, an important one for feminists, but it did not derive from any particular academic or political training. I am extremely uncomfortable, then, with the notion that I or other

working-class people have to be taught by the bourgeois academy how to "read as working class."[17]

What interests me more is being able to take my experiences and readings of "working-class" culture and "working-class women's literature" and apply them to help other working-class people in the academy, primarily my students, who may read as "working class" to a lesser or greater degree.[18] The idea of a "role model" can be problematic--as bell hooks points out, it is important "not to assume the role of all-knowing professor" (*Talking* 52), and as Berenice Fisher notes, "[i]deal versions" of women's lives as models can be dangerous (254). They can certainly backfire and lead students to blame themselves for not living up to some ideal, thus covering up the critical perspective that "[c]apitalist and patriarchal structures prevent us all from succeeding, no matter how many role models we acquire" (235). And yet, given the alienation of

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[17] For further discussion of "working-class" ways of "reading," see Wendy Luttrell's "Working-class Women's Ways of Knowing: Effects of Gender, Race, and Class." Luttrell's analysis of working-class women's forms of "common sense" knowledge versus academic knowledge seem to correspond to Gramsci's notions of "common sense" and what he terms "organic intellectuals."

[18] I believe that helping these students will, in turn, help middle- and upper-class students, who can learn also to "read as working class," but in a different way because they have lived different class "realities"; they are more likely to experience the "click"--the "oh, now I see the constructions of class, the materiality, the oppression"--in a manner that poor and working-class students do not.

the academy for poor and working-class students[19], role models seem imperative. hooks argues that many feminists, of all classes, *have* served to create "model" environments, often times the *only* environments in the academy,

> where students (mostly female) from materially disadvantaged circumstances [can] speak from [their] class positionality, acknowledging both the impact of class on our social status as well as critiquing the class biases of feminist thought. (*Teaching* 181)

Feminists have, perhaps as a result of learning to "read as women," begun to learn to "read as working class," at least to a certain extent. After all, many feminist critiques of patriarchy have necessarily involved critiques of capitalism.[20]

hooks also believes that "[w]hen those of us who are working class or from working-class backgrounds share our perspectives, we subvert the tendency to focus on the thoughts, attitudes, and experiences of those who are materially privileged" (*Teaching* 185); thus, we read the culture "as working-class readers." We are, hooks tells us,

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[19] See my discussion of such alienation in Chapter Two.

[20] My own director, Elizabeth Langland, has served as a role model for me, even though she is not from the working class. Her commitment to theoretical/practical feminism, however, and her courageous movement as a woman into the academy, and into positions of power in the academy--graduate coordinator and recently Associate Dean of Faculty for the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences--have been inspirational, as have been the accomplishments of other feminist women in the academy, such as Patricia Craddock, who served as Chair of the English Department, and Ofelia Schutte, Professor of Philosophy.

"empowered when we recognize our own agency" (*Teaching* 183), and I believe that we can help our students to "recognize [their] own agency" as well, wherever they may be in their process of "reading as working class." Having working-class writers' texts to read can also benefit these students; it can tell them what they may already suspect, as I did, that such writers indeed do and did exist, even one-hundred and fifty years ago. Just as seeing a real live working-class-raised Ph.D. can offer physical, material proof to students that the academy *can* accommodate working-class people, so too can teaching them working-class literature.

Thus, I am uncomfortable with claims that certain forms of writing are inherently "bourgeois."[21] For example, Raymond Williams refers to fiction as the "literary form" of the bourgeois. Pointing to the widening opportunities for writers in the early Victorian period--a "freedom to go out and compete in [the] market," which is "a classic bourgeois definition of freedom" ("The Writer" 82)--he claims that the novel "was virtually impenetrable to working class writers"; "[i]nstead, they wrote marvellous autobiographies" due to that form's ties to "oral forms" that were far more accessible to the working classes ("The Writer" 86). Thus, he claims, "few of them managed to write good or even any novels" ("The Writer" 86). His argument seems similar, in

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[21] I discuss this issue, along with its relation to questions of canon and genre, more thoroughly in Chapter Three.

some respects, to Woolf's argument concerning middle-class women and poetry in *A Room of One's Own*: poetry was a "man's" form of writing. Women needed money and a room of their own to write it (as they did to write fiction, but that form was more accessible). But as Gloria Anzaldúa responds to Woolf, so do I, and to Williams as well:

> Forget the room of one's own. [Forget the voice that says, 'that is a man's form of writing or a bourgeois form of writing']--write in the kitchen, lock yourself up in the bathroom. Write on the bus or the welfare line, on the job or during meals, between waking and sleeping. I write while sitting on the john. (170)

And I tell my students this, explaining how I have managed to write despite poverty and ill health, despite having little money and a very run-down, sometimes dangerous "room." I also tell them that perhaps working-class Victorian writers did not write "on the john," but I explain that they *did* manage somehow to write novels, the women writers included.[22] William's dismissal is, I believe, premature; it is also potentially damaging to poor, working-class and/or women students and scholars. It has occurred before a concerted effort has been made by scholars to *find* such writers of fiction.

While the Victorian working-class poetry and autobiography that we now see being examined by some scholars constitute the beginnings of a *self-*

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[22] For a more detailed discussion of male working-class Victorian fiction writers see Chapter Three.

representationality on the part of working-class subjects, they are *only* a beginning. This is especially evident in terms of autobiography. Why haven't the diaries and autobiographies of working-class women such as Marianne Farningham and Mary Linskill (and of women slightly above the working class, such as Isabella Fyvie Mayo) been given closer consideration by literary critics? Why have the diaries of Hannah Cullwick, so significant because she was a maidservant, been given attention, while a text written by another maidservant in Victorian England--Elizabeth Mary Parker--has received little if any attention? Because an upper-class man of the Victorian period, Arthur Munby, deemed Cullwick's texts important, and so they gained recognition in the academy? Why has Parker's text--not a diary but a novel, *The Rose of Avondale*--been virtually ignored by critics?[23] And why hasn't Marianne Farningham's

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[23] Ironically, that we even know of this text's existence is probably due to Arthur Munby's mention of it in his diaries. It was, according to the critic Derek Hudson, "an unexpected discovery in his collector's field," which "delighted" Munby (312). Munby states that he left the shop where he discovered the novel "with a glow of satisfaction . . . so far as I know, this is the first maidservant who has written a novel" (312), and he cites the novel's publisher, R. J. Bush, who referred to Parker as being "'as nice and modest a young woman of 23 or so as you need wish to see; just like any other servant in manner, only very quiet'" (312). Her "quietness" might be explained, however, by the danger of her situation: she "'begged'" Bush "'not to let them [her employers--a 'gentleman' and his wife who lived 'at the western end of St. Jame's Place' in London] know of the book, lest they should be displeased'" (312). This gender and class-based necessity for anonymity is no doubt a factor in the novel ultimately being overlooked within the academy.

and Mary Linskill's fiction (and that of Isabella Fyvie Mayo or Hesba Stretton, both just a notch above working class) been considered significant and important? How damaging is it that the diaries and autobiographies which have been given some notice are being read outside of a context of other working-class Victorian women's literature, indeed, outside of an established *tradition* of working-class Victorian women's writing, writing which includes not just autobiography but fiction as well? (I am thinking here of the importance of a tradition of literature along the lines of what Virginia Woolf and then later Elaine Showalter point to, as well as the danger involved with tokenization, when certain texts stand in for that tradition.)

To answer these questions I must circle back to my "rough" beginnings, literally and figuratively. And I am perpetually losing those beginnings, despite my resistance. A "respectable" academic discourse keeps creeping in; my newly acquired privilege, which is *not* equivalent to that of my middle- and upper-class academic colleagues, keeps asserting itself, and it must, if I am to survive here--here, in front of a computer paid for with debt,[24] part of the insane $65,000 worth of debt that separates me from

[24] Actually, when I wrote those words I *was* sitting in front of my own computer paid for with debt. Now that I am editing, however, that computer has long since broken down, and I am on a borrowed computer, dealing with the constant interruptions involved with trying to work in someone else's home. The other option--the noisy, hectic university computer lab--is even worse, however.

those other "privileged" academics. What keeps me where I am, circling round and round? Why can't I stick to my "subject"; or better yet, why doesn't it stick to me? It keeps sliding off, repelled by a slippage of discourse. And now I keep hearing some of my colleagues' voices--"How can you say you're working-class at all anymore, now that you're so educated; now that you have so much privilege?"

"Now that I make $9,000 a year as a teacher at a university versus the $13,000 a year I made as a cook at a nursing home?"

"What would *real* working-class people say?"

"That they make more money; that I'm a fool; that I must be crazy to want to be around those pompous, arrogant, full of themselves people? But that they're proud of me, hope I'll make a difference; that they'd like to go to college too. That if I can do it, get all those degrees--what are they called again?--that maybe, just maybe, they can do it too, or at least get *one* of them?"

And I ask her, my working-class friend Toni, "Did you get the postcard, the postcard from London?"

"I couldn't believe it. I held it up, and looked at it, just looked at it, but I couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe that you were *really* there. I still can't believe it."

But she believed that I'd find those working-class Victorian women writers--"Of course they exist. You exist, don't you?" And just for that moment, I *did* exist.

But then I was back at the computer, writing and talking.

"I can't believe it either, but I've still got to write this damn paper, you know, the one for the colloquium."

"Colloquium. I don't know that word--what is it?" I take a deep breath, sigh, take another deep breath, and this time the effort *is* relief.

I will try to explain. My subject keeps sliding off, repelled by a slippage of discourse.

Suzanne Sowinska, my working-class sister-academic, explains:

> We also write theory and find ourselves resisting theoretical models that refuse to include descriptions of the reality of working-class life. . . . If we are to accept . . . current theoretical trends . . . we accept both a limiting paradigm and a way of saying what we mean that linguistically alienates most of the 'subjects' we intend to describe. In short, discourse theory with its formulation of passive subjects tends to overlook the ways that any symbolic system is subject to notions of 'experience,' the realm where class relations are understood, felt, and actually lived. The experiences of working-class women with the specific forms of knowledge gained from those experiences are never simply coded in one discourse but woven in between, through, and around a multitude of discourses. (149)

So I went to London, and I spent two weeks in the British Library reading the autobiography and fiction of working-class Victorian women--every book I could get my

hands on; every book I could read in the limited time I had, in the limited space I'd been given--the limited physical, intellectual, psychological, emotional, spiritual space. I first poured over the autobiographies and biographies of Victorian women writers I had identified as possibly working-class. For this identification, I kept in mind the definitions of historians, as well as those of nineteenth-century men who wrote on class, such as Patrick Colquhoun, Thomas Wright, Lloyd Jones and J.M. Ludlow.[25] I also considered the criteria used by literary critics and historians who have written on working-class autobiography, for example, Nan Hackett,[26] P. J. Keating,[27] David Vincent,[28]

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[25] See my discussion of these historians in Chapter Three. J.F.C. Harrison's *The Common People of Great Britain: A History from the Norman Conquest to the Present* is particularly useful, especially his discussion of Patrick Colquhoun's map of society in 1814: "Colquhoun's sixth class of some 10 million people contains most of those who a few years later were to appear as the working classes" (234). This sixth class was defined as follows: "6th. Working Mechanics, Artisans, Handicrafts, Agricultural Labourers, and others who subsist by labour in various employments, with their families. Menial Servants" (Harrison, 233).

[26] In her *XIX Century British Working-Class Autobiographies: An Annotated Bibliography*, Hackett defines "working class" as meeting two qualifications: "work at manual labor, skilled or unskilled, at least at the beginning of [the person's] working life, and not own[ing] land or capital at the time" (6), as well as considering oneself and one's parents as working class (6). The authors I identified as working class--Marianne Farningham, Mary Linskill, and Elizabeth Mary Parker--fit these criteria, although they are not included in the Hackett's book. (Farningham's autobiography was written after 1900; Linskill's diary was unpublished; and Parker did not write one, as far as I can ascertain). Isabella Fyvie Mayo--an author I situate as slightly above working-class--fits some of the criteria.

and Richard Dennis.[29] However, as Reginia Gagnier does in *Subjectivities* (138), I finally settled upon the criteria used by John Burnett, David Mayall and David Vincent in their book *The Autobiography of the Working Class: An Annotated, Critical Bibliography. Volume I: 1790-1900.* They write,

> The task of defining the notion of 'working class' raised inevitable problems. Our aim was to include those who for some period of their lives could be described as working class, whether

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[27] Keating's definition of "working class" for characters in Victorian fiction includes six categories: "Respectable"--"usually a skilled artisan"; "Intellectual"; "Poor"; "Debased"; "Eccentric"; and "Criminal" (26-27). He includes under urban "working class" "those who follow a skilled or semi-skilled trade, or who provide a service for the benefit of the community as a whole" [Farningham's, Linskill's, Mayo's, Parker's and Stretton's fathers would all fall under this category]; and secondly, those who work at an unskilled, manual job" (29). He also includes "street traders" and "small shopkeepers" "within a specifically working-class area" (29), stating that what matters most "is how far that person associates himself, in terms of status, values, and attitudes, with his working-class environment" (29). All of the women writers I pinpoint had such an association, as did their fathers.

[28] Vincent's *Bread, Knowledge and Freedom: A Study of Nineteenth-Century Working Class Autobiography* includes discussion of those in "skilled trades" as "working class": "what comes across in these autobiographies is that constant financial insecurity was the lot even of those working men who had the good fortune to avoid recruitment into the ranks of the casual labourers or factory proletariat, and spent their lives in seemingly prosperous and well-protected skilled trades" (68). This description fits the circumstances of Farningham's, Linksill's, Parker's, Mayo's and even Hesba Stretton's father.

[29] Dennis's excellent detailed explanation and definition of "petit bourgeoisie" (74-77) demonstrates that Farningham's, Linskill's and Mayo's fathers would *not* fall into the "petit bourgeois" category, nor the "lower middle class" or even "labour aristocracy" category.

> defined in terms of their relationship with the means of production, their educational experiences and cultural ties, by self-ascription, or by any combination of these factors. The intention was to locate autobiographies not only of persons born into the working class who remained in it all their lives, but also those who fought against the obstacles of their background and moved away from their origins . . . [for example, those attaining 'respectable' artisans status by employing others] (xxxi).

Some of the writers I considered turned out to be solidly middle-class. (Anna Eliza Bray, for example, was the daughter of a bullion porter, yet I discovered that this particular occupation was considered a "gentleman's occupation"; her father had rather substantial private means.) Others were raised in a manner that we would now call "blue-collar" lower middle-class, but at the time was situated in that grey area between "petit bourgeois" and "working class." This was the case with two writers: Hesba Stretton (pseudonym for Sarah Smith), whose father was a printer, and Isabella Fyvie Mayo, whose father--a London baker who "rose through every grade of the business till he finally bought it . . . [although] much remained to be paid off" (24)--died bankrupt when she was eight years old, forcing her to work as a teenager at a variety of clerical jobs. These writers are extremely important given their position along the class continuum, a position which, because it blends elements of the petit bourgeoisie and the working class, points to the complexities of class subjectivity.

Mayo especially demonstrates how much closer to working class some of these positions were along that continuum. As I note earlier, the historical research of Royden Harrison and his colleagues problematizes any easy distinction of certain tradesmen as "petit bourgeois." Ian McKay's article "Bondage in the Bakehouse? The Strange Case of the Journeymen Bakers, 1840-1880" describes the master bakers of London, the occupation of Mayo's father, who had been a journeyman baker until he set up his own small shop: "Faced with the savage competition of the industry, London masters could either overwork their journeymen, adulterate or tamper with their bread, or declare bankruptcy" (56). Having once been a journeyman himself, Mayo's father could not exploit his workers, and thus he failed as a member of the "petit bourgeoisie." Mckay explains how regional differences decentered the notion of an homogenous "labour aristocracy" due to the control of undersellers and the glutting of the market: "the abolition of price fixing wrought a revolution which transformed baking into one of the most depressed, overcrowded and unremunerative trades of the day" (54). McKay's analysis thus adds to the case that Mayo was closer to "working-class" than "petit bourgeois."[30]

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[30] Mayo's self-identification as well as what she reveals in her autobiography about her place of residence also support this argument. Like Mayo, her neighbors in the house where her family rented rooms were positioned on the class continuum as nearly working class: one was a family kicked out for failure to pay rent (38), and the others were a single woman and her brother, who worked in a shop (39), a

Other women, I concluded, were definitely working class given the criteria I chose--Marianne Farningham, a teacher who was the daughter of a postal worker (her autobiography is included in Burnett and his colleagues' *The Autobiography of the Working Class*); Mary Linskill, a milliner's apprentice, and later a teacher and governess, who was the daughter of a watchmaker who had no "shop of his own" and later worked as a constable and a bailiff (Humble and Quinlan 6); and Elizabeth Mary Parker, a maidservant who was the daughter of an innkeeper. These women descended from working-class ancestors who were labourers, crofters, jet workers, glovers and paper-makers; lived in working-class environments; and considered themselves to be working class. For other writers, such as Isa Craig and Mary Lucy Pendered, who as far as I know did not write autobiographies, I could find no additional biographical information on them in the time I was allotted, and thus their exact class positions are still uncertain.

Although some of these writers' class positions improved substantially either due to marriage (as was the case with Mayo) or the income earned from their writings (as was the case with Stretton and Farningham), one must keep in mind that while class is certainly related to income, it is also related to education, status, cultural knowledge and

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"young man, a Sunday school teacher" (40), and an older woman who had fallen from middle-class status and lived on less than £25 per year (42-3).

other factors.[31] And due to the complexity of what determines class, marrying into money, or out of it for that matter, does not automatically, instantaneously change ones' class position. The lack of education in childhood years, the physical consequences of living in poverty, the psychological scars from such oppression--these effects are often permanent and irreversible, as I myself know.

I once responded to a professor who informed me that I was no longer working-class due to my graduate education, that no amount of education could restore the part of my lung that had been surgically removed. I told her that as a child from a family on welfare, I had received very poor health care throughout my life, often lived without adequate shelter and warmth, and was forced to overwork myself to survive. As a result, I developed much more advanced lung disease then I would have had I grown up middle class. I didn't bother to list for her the numerous other physical problems that poverty had inscribed upon my body--indelibly. Sadly, this professor, who told me that she herself was from a working-class background, had to deny the material consequences which most of us who manage to achieve some upward mobility suffer.[32] One of my undergraduate students,

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[31] See Chapters One, Two, and Three for more detailed discussion of the variables involved with class subjectivity.

[32] In Chapter Two I discuss the extreme difficulty involved with upward mobility and the rigidity of class position for the poor and working classes, the denial of

on the other hand, recently demonstrated her far greater understanding of these consequences when she wrote in a response paper:

> My mother grew up ashamed of her poverty and of herself. Fortunately, she got a scholarship to college and married an affluent man. My mother has two Bachelors degrees and a Masters degree. My mother also has deeply scarred skin (her family couldn't afford a doctor), teeth that break all the time (from malnutrition and lack of dental care as a child), had reproductive problems that went undetected until adulthood that prevented her from having a child for six years, and carries with her a burden of chronic depression and feelings of inferiority.

Based on an understanding of the material consequences of class position, especially those arising from childhood poverty, I decided to focus on those women writers who identified themselves as working-class and who were working as teenagers to support themselves and/or to contribute to the support of their families. And because their position as working-class subjects was incredibly important, especially in terms of how they would represent, indeed construct, working-class subjectivity, I spent a great deal of my time reading Marianne Farningham's *A Working Woman's Life: An Autobiography* and her biography by W. Glandwr Morgan, *Marianne Farningham in Her Welsh Home;* Mary Linskill's biography by the Rev. David Quinlan and Arthur F. Humble, *Mary Linskill: The Whitby Novelist*, which contains substantial portions of her unpublished diary; and Isabella

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which results from the "myth of classlessness" in our culture that DeMott describes.

Fyvie Mayo's *Recollections of Fifty Years*. And I learned from their self-representations how important constructions of working-class subjectivity were to them, especially in terms of the values they espoused.

Marianne Farningham, who, upon her mother's death, took on all of her mother's domestic duties at the age of 12, whose father said that she "never had a girlhood, but grew at once from a child into a woman" (*Life* 43), spent her days working from 6 a.m. until late at night, and still she would drink "strong tea" to stay awake past midnight in order to read (47-8). And all she had to read were "two monthly magazines published by the Sunday School Union" (44). When she discusses how she searched through those writings for representations of herself--of her working-class subjectivity--it becomes apparent how empowering such a search was for her, even despite the results:

> In one of these [magazines] was a series of descriptive articles on men who had been poor boys, and risen to be rich and great. Every month I hoped to find the story of some poor ignorant *girl* who, beginning life as handicapped as I, had yet been able by her own efforts and the blessing of God upon them to live a life of usefulness, if not of greatness. But I believe there was not a woman in the whole series. (44)

Farningham went on to write novels and essays, however, that would include those women, demonstrating that although she found no constructions of working-class women's subjectivities in the texts available to her, she knew the importance of such constructions, to herself, and perhaps

more importantly, to the working-class women like her; in fact, she wrote essays designed specifically for working-class girls in which she encouraged them to educate themselves, to "read and think" (*Girlhood* 48); "Books, real good ones, are necessary to the mind as daily bread is to the body" (*Home Life* 74), she told them.

And Mary Linskill, who was apprenticed to a milliner at age 16, who educated herself enough to become a schoolteacher and a governess, who used her work as governess to gain access to reading the classics, "chose" to starve--and I put the word "chose" in quotation marks because others saw it as a choice, whereas Linskill knew that it wasn't--she "chose" to starve rather than to write "popular novels" that would focus on subjectivities and values which *she* herself did not consider worthy and valuable to other working-class women. She wrote, instead, novels that focused on working-class women's lives and experiences in a way that expressed values very different from those presented by the works of popular writers. In her diary, Linskill demonstrates not only how she was expected to give up her values by acquiescing to the use of not only a middle-class form, but of middle-class content as well; she also shows how her insistence upon adhering to what she believed was right for herself and other working-class women was used against her by middle-class women. For example, her landlady, Miss Mackereth, who had previously

loaned her money, decided not to do so again; this was a loan that would literally keep Linskill from going hungry. Linskill explains, "'She [Miss Mackereth] *blamed my own want of effort* for all that has occurred'" (37). In another such instance, Linskill invokes her working-class identity when confronted by a judgmental, middle-class woman (Jenny Miles) who implied that she was to blame for her own poverty because of her choice not to write popular fiction. This woman told her, "'George Eliot and Miss Yonge do not starve, Miss Barrett does not and none of them ever did'"; and Linskill replied that none of those women "ever depended on authorship for a livelihood" (37), thus pointing out that none of those women was working-class like herself.

Isabella Fyvie Mayo's autobiography also makes clear how important it was for her to clarify working-class women's subjectivity as distinct from middle-class women's; in fact, she is extremely careful to discuss her own "split" subjectivity--lower middle-class in some respects, but working-class in comparison to those solidly middle-class women who had fallen into "genteel poverty." She described the difference this way by explaining the type of women who came into Miss Besse Parkes' Office for the Employment of Women, where she worked as a secretary:

> The work at the society's offices was rather depressing. It meant confronting, advising, and making notes concerning an ever-flowing stream of feminine misfortune, misery, and incapacity. Most of the women who came to the office belonged to the middle classes, and nearly all were middle-

> aged. There was a deadly gentility about them, and though they represented themselves as in dire distress, or as dependent on relations not able or willing to maintain them, they were frequently well dressed--quite grand, indeed, as compared with my own shabby little self. (79)

Mayo later wrote an article for *Good Words* entitled "Forlorn Females *versus* Working Women" (90), clearly noting the importance of the distinction. Thus, in their autobiographies and other literary works, these working-class women made a point of depicting themselves, and other working-class women, in a way that would make that depiction *recognizable to working-class women*.[33]

What little academic scholarship does exist on these women's autobiographies, however, would serve to make that depiction less recognizable, due to a "normalization" of subjectivity similar to that which occurred with Margaret Oliphant's autobiography.[34] It is ironic that the one critic who devotes any substantial time to a close reading of Farningham's autobiography--Deborah Gorham in her book *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal*--fails to mention that Farningham wrote fiction--something that she does *not* overlook with the other women she focuses upon. Gorham argues that while Farningham "was sympathetic to a widening of opportunities for girls and women, hers was very much a

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[33] While that depiction would also be recognizable to people of all classes, I am most interested in the effect it has on working-class women, given that they have access to so few depictions of other working-class women.

[34] See Chapter Four.

'womanly' career" (147), and she explains this "'womanly' career"[35] in a footnote: "[Hearne] became editor of *The Sunday School Times*, and under her pseudonym of 'Marianne Farningham', wrote several improving books for young people" (151). Farningham's *novels* are conspicuously absent--an absence that has been reinscribed by the few other critics who mention Farningham.

Gorham also does not consider Farningham working class, including her, instead, under the category of "middle class"--albeit at the very bottom, "the lowest level of the lower middle class" (147)--when discussing her autobiography; such a placement certainly highlights my point that class designations are indeed slippery. However, Gorham excludes certain facts about Farningham's life and distorts others, strategies that also allow her, by ignoring the facts that relate to Farningham's *working-class* identity, to place Farningham in the category of upholding the *middle-class* feminine ideal,[36] an ideal that Farningham did not seem to uphold. Gorham argues that "[g]iven the father's occupations, we can place the family at the lowest levels of the lower middle class. The Hearne family

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[35] See my discussion in Chapter Four of a similar depiction by Oliphant's first biographers, the Colbys, that makes Oliphant's career as a writer into a "womanly" one.

[36] See Chapter Four for my discussion of this ideal and the way in which Annie Coghill and literary critics reconstructed Margaret Oliphant (a writer from a lower middle-class background) so that she would also fit into it.

employed no live-in servants at all" (147), but when referring to her father's "occupations," she does not go into any detail about his being a "tradesman" of the lower middle class, only stating that he had a "business" and allowed Marianne to help him with it (146). Farningham's autobiography, however, does not describe her father as having a "business" that employed workers; he had no shop, only a "workshop" he built himself in their "little garden" (16), and he had Marianne help him to repair boots, not to aid in the running of a "business." The father "never had a yard of land of his own" (16), she reveals, a fact that Gorham excludes, and she discusses how he had *intended* to set up "a small private brewery" in the outhouse, but never did due to his becoming "an abstainer" (16). Such endeavors were common, *not* among the middle classes, or the lower middle classes, but among the working classes, some of whom became "penny capitalists" in just such a manner.[37]

Gorham also does not deal with the fact that the family employed *no* workers (servants or employees of the "business"), or with Farningham's self-definition as "poor" and of the "working classes." And in order to make her appear to fit the middle-class feminine ideal, she also excludes important material details about Farningham's class position, ones which Farningham includes in her

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[37] See Benson's *The Penny Capitalists: A Study of Nineteenth-Century Working-Class Entrepreneurs*.

autobiography. For example, she cites Farningham's construction of her sister as ideally feminine through her description of her sister's behavior during the last months of her life: "'Those months have always seemed to me a most sacred time. She was so bright and patient, and even happy'(67)" (147); however, Gorham excludes Farningham's more negative, class-specific description on the same page: that her family "had the very common experience of the poor . . . watch[ing] our dear one get worse and weaker day by day" (67). She thus removes the pain Farningham suffered as a result of her class position.

I remember sitting in the British Library, however, crying over that pain. Despite the odd glances cast my way, despite the obvious lack of "decorum" such tears represented, I cried. When I read how Marianne Farningham was forced to watch her sister Elizabeth die slowly, for they couldn't afford proper medical treatment for her: ". . . and so we had the very common experience of the poor . . . we watched our dear one get worse and weaker day by day" (67). When I read how Isabella Mayo was forced to work for several days straight on only two hours of sleep: "Once work came in--as it often did--in the evening, and the time marked for its return compelled me to work through that night, all the next day, the following night, and the day after till about seven in the evening" (101); how her "life and death fight for bread and independence lasted" for nine

years and left her "for a time a wreck in nerves and health" (116). When I read Mary Linskill's diary entries for October, 1876: "'Tonight I am, I think, as unhappy as I can be. I am left alone, exhausted, and with a bad headache. Then had little food. I have no fire . . . . What can I do tomorrow? What ought I do?'" (17); "'I do not know how I live through these hours of horror'" (17); "'I sit here blinded, bewildered, exhausted'" (20). When I read her entries for April: "'I am literally in rags'" (28); "'I was hungry, yes hungry, and had no food'" (29); and later: "'. . . I have not written one page that has been paid for. I have subsisted on credit and borrowed money. This state of things can go on no longer'" (32). When I read how it *did* go on, but most of all, and I'm not sure why, when I read that her fiancé died suddenly, that she never loved another man again.

Or perhaps I do know why. Perhaps it was recognition. Perhaps I was seeing my father, dying slowly when I was in my teens, no money for his medical care; the way I worked 14-hour days at age 16 (sometimes even younger--I remember when I was 14 being raced to the hospital after having a heat stroke in the nursing home dishwashing room--the temperature was 115 degrees); the headaches, the exhaustion, the days without food, the nights spent shivering in a run-down apartment with no heat (actually, for most of graduate school I have lived in such an apartment); and then there

was my first boyfriend--Troy Shaub, a factory worker--who died trying to keep himself and a friend warm--only 22, killed in a fire started by an old space heater. Perhaps that's why I cried, not caring what anyone in the British Library would think of me. Perhaps for the first time in my years of graduate work I saw myself in the literary texts of the Victorian women writers I was studying. Yes, perhaps it *was* recognition.[38]

And perhaps it was recognition I experienced when reading these writers' novels, for I certainly was not recognizing the standard plots or the standard characterizations I'd found in the other Victorian novels I had read. Not that these women's novels did not follow the same form, the same style. In fact, Elizabeth Mary Parker's *The Rose of Avondale* appeared quite conventional; but something was different, and I recognized that difference. Looking over my notes I'm not sure exactly what it is, but I know that it's there. And whatever it is I can make no claims that it appears in all, most, or even a substantial minority of fiction by working-class Victorian women. After all, I have so little to go on. I read perhaps a dozen novels in their entirety, skimmed through dozens more, and I do not have one of them in front of me now from which to draw a "close" reading. Microfilming them would have cost a

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[38] Such recognition is, I believe, also important to poor and working-class students.

great deal of money; all I can do is hope that I will find an errant copy hidden on some public library bookshelf somewhere in the U.S., or that money will appear from somewhere so that I can order the microfilms from the British Library.

I say all of this because I am aware that in the profession of literary criticism, we are required to provide "close readings" and to make substantial claims about the literature we read, not vague, almost bizarre ones stating, "I'm not sure exactly what it is" that I see operating in these texts. But part of the problem is that despite my understanding of the post-structuralist maxim, "there is nothing outside of the text," I do not have the actual, material "books," so how much *can* I say about the "texts"? Thus, I end up needing to focus upon their contexts, which involve material "realities" that constrain the type of statements I can make about the "texts" themselves. And, in my attempts to say something about these "texts," I refuse to provide closer readings of "texts" I could and probably should compare them to--those written by middle-class women. I am painfully aware of the class-based reasons that *those* "books" are in front of me, enabling me to make such close readings, while the "others" are not. I am willing to risk the scrutiny of the academy, however, and appear as a less

"respectable" scholar; I find that "respectability" far more destructive than the consequences of the scrutiny.[39]

So for now, I have some notes, some memories, and this sense that there is something different about these "other" novels. Mary Linskill's novel *Hagar: A North Yorkshire Pastoral*, for instance. Looking at my notes, I see no quotations, just a brief plot summary--but I remember the difference. Hagar is a poor country girl, nearly illiterate; both of her parents are dead, and she takes care of her old, sick grandfather. Slightly unusual for a Victorian plot, but not really. Two men pursue her--the working-class schoolteacher who teaches her to read and write, and the wealthy squire's son. But this squire's son is no Arthur Donnithorne who woos the working-class girl away from the working-class man who loves her, ruining her, rendering her a rough, common criminal, needing to repent of her sins. Hagar is no Hetty; her teacher no Adam Bede. This is decidedly *not* a George Eliot novel. Nor is it an Elizabeth Gaskell novel. Hagar need not be disciplined, like Mary Barton, not to fall in love with an upper-class man. She does not need to learn from the "rough" example of an "evil" aunt Esther (289)--a prostitute, a fallen woman, a

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[39] See my more detailed explanation of this issue in Chapter Two. I do plan, however, to provide close readings of both sets of "texts"--the working-class and the middle-class--in future work, once I have acquired the material means to purchase the "books" written by the working-class women.

"sinner" (170) who did not learn in time to stay in her station.[40] She does not have to watch her working-class father turn "rough," criminal, through murdering her upper-class lover. There is never any question that Hagar could love the squire's son--not because the text forbids such a plot structure in the way that the middle-class women's texts do,[41] but because Hagar is merely respectfully friendly towards him; that is all. She has no lesson to learn, no lives to destroy. But *he* mistakenly assumes that she loves him, that she will marry him; that she *must* marry him, for after all, he represents upward mobility and respectability. So he tells his father of his intentions (before informing Hagar of course), but the Squire becomes enraged, disowning his son for contemplating such an impossible match. The squire's son is then rejected by Hagar, who is in love with her working-class teacher. The squire's son leaves the town and goes off to work at manual labour; he becomes a worker in jet (the job Mary Linskill's brother had), climbing high up on cliffs to pick the jet

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[40] Elizabeth Langland argues that Mary "must learn that she truly 'loves' a man of her own class, Jem Wilson, instead of the wealthy son of the factory owner. The rhetoric of love [in the text] justifies the wisdom of Providence in so placing individuals" (147). Thus, the text argues that it is wrong for a working-class woman to marry above her station, because "Providence" ordains that she remain in her class position.

[41] Langland argues that "[m]arriage between a working-class woman and a higher-class man" is a "non-narratable" plot structure "in nineteenth-century fiction" (1).

from the rocks. But unlike Linskill's brother, he doesn't do quite so well at this working-class occupation. Perhaps due to his ineptness, or perhaps due to his despair over Hagar's refusal (the narrator implies both possibilities), he falls over the cliff, plummeting to his death. No enraged working-class father must kill him. He kills himself.

In the second to last chapter of the novel, Hagar is described, however, as *almost* a criminal, as *almost* responsible for the death of the Squire's son. He is ruined by her, not the other way around--she is no Hetty, no Esther--but dark times descend upon poor Hagar; her working-class neighbors whisper about her; her respectability is questioned. But then, the reader turns the page and the sun rises again. Hagar's reputation is suddenly redeemed--how? Merely that *some* time passes, and not very much. Hagar we see has now married the man she loves, the schoolteacher, and settled into quiet respectability. She is still working-class, however. Although an orphan, no "lost" relative appears to reveal that she is really middle class. She is no Jane Eyre, just as she is no Hetty Sorrel or Mary Barton. She is not exiled to Australia or across the Atlantic. She is both the criminal "rough" and the "respectable" married woman--or perhaps she is neither. Perhaps the novel deconstructs the opposition altogether; it certainly at least illuminates its contradictions. At any

rate, no "respectable" Dinah-type character replaces a "rough" Hetty as the proper bride for the "respectable" working-class man. Hagar has her man in the end and literacy to boot. She does, in a sense, marry "up," for her class status improves: she gains "educational capital." The Squire, on the other hand, is left agonizing over the "rough" way he treated his son, and the son, of course, is left dead. The squire's "roughness," his moral failure, is that he decreed that an upper-class man should not marry a working-class woman. His own "rough" decree leads to his son's death.[42]

That I keep laughing over that character's death; that it gives me so much satisfaction--that is all the difference I need, even if that "difference" is not one that most "respectable" scholars would consider substantial because I have not supported my claim with close readings of both sets

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[42] This is an interesting reversal of what occurs in *Mary Barton*, where the working-class father kills the upper-class son. I also would argue that the novel, while it does not include marriage between an upper-class man and a working-class woman in its plot structure, does allow for that possibility: the text implies that if upper-class people change their "rough," destructive views, and if an upper-class man appears who is as kind and as loving as Hagar's working-class husband, such a marriage is possible. Linskill thus effectively allows for the *possibility* of interclass marriage while maintaining the positive aspects, indeed the pride, of working-class identity and marriage. Inter-class marriage is possible, not because upper-class men are in any way superior to working-class men; in fact, the opposite is implied. Rather, upper-class people must change their "rough," inferior values; they must become more "respectable"--more working class. Linskill's text deconstructs, then, the 'respectable'/'rough' dichotomy.

of texts, the "working class" and the "middle class." And when I turn to Elizabeth Mary Parker's novel, *The Rose of Avondale*, I see that "difference" there as well, but in a slightly different form. Once again a young woman has the choice of two suitors, and once again there is no question that she chooses the man with the lesser class status. But this time the heroine is a "young heiress"--Gertrude Heathcote, known by all the townspeople as "'The Rose of Avondale'"(54); she is a "sweet administering angel" (51), the epitome of the respectable Victorian "Angel in the House," and is betrothed, against her wishes, to a rather obnoxious member of the aristocracy. This man, the "only son of Sir Riversdale" (97), is described by the narrator in rather unflattering terms: he has a "cold Grecian face" and "no soul shone there, no feeling or truth were in his eyes" (90); and yet he is the lovely Gertrude's fiancé, although she "decidedly refused to consider him as such" (97). When Gertrude's father is financially "ruined," this plunge into debt and away from respectability literally kills him: "Poor man! the sudden shock had been too great for him, and brought on a fatal heart disease, that hurried him into his grave" (101). For Gertrude, however, the father's "ruin" is positive. Before he dies, she takes over his responsibilities with confidence: "Dear papa, do not fear; leave all the arrangements to me" (100). And the indebtedness saves Gertrude from the clutches of the evil

Francis Riversdale, who, annoyed at her rejection of him, frequently makes comments such as these to himself: "When that young lady is mine . . . I will pay her for this. She shall suffer every scornful word and every scornful look" (135), and "I will take some of the brightness and pride from that face" (151). Of course he never does, because through the father's ruin (and death) Gertrude no longer has to marry Francis because he breaks off the engagement, claiming that the heiress of Avondale "no longer existed" (154); without her father and her father's money she literally becomes a different person to Francis. Then Gertrude's true love, Harold Fairlie, a respectable middle-class man, proposes.

Harold is a character-type I had never seen before. And perhaps the difference is a subtle one, but nonetheless it is extremely important. Repeatedly throughout the novel we see detailed descriptions of this man helping the poor--not through certain types of charity, such as giving money or food, however, but through manual labor. He "wander[s] amongst the gleaners," working alongside them; he does work for widows, old people, "whoever most needed help" (137). He even repairs the school that the poor children attend and does "improvements" on it (138). He stops along his walk home to help poor boys pick elderberries (177-8). And in each instance the material, physical details of his labour are described. In addition, because of Fairlie, a poor

parson, Mr. Brooks, who has been waiting for years to secure a position so that he can marry his betrothed, a governess, is finally able to do so when Fairlie gives him the position at his Church. Fairlie's presence in the town improves the circumstances of all the characters introduced in the novel.

After proposing to Gertrude, who replies, "I am only a poor girl now" (187), a fact which is of no consequence to Harold, Gertrude's money (£4,000 that were once her father's) is restored to her by a repentant old clerk who had stolen it in the first place. The father's "ruin" and subsequent death are merely a vehicle then for Gertrude to avoid a "ruinous" match with Francis--"ruinous" because of his despicable character. Through the debt, Gertrude does not lose respectability, but gains it rather, and the restoration of the money is an added bonus. For another character in the novel--Laura Graham--the opposite occurs. She becomes rich, and because of this, Francis marries her instead. At the end of the novel we see how disreputable these two have become, and indeed, they are made aware of this fact: "One look at his handsome, vain face told that he was not a happy man. The fair lady had a will and temper of her own, before which he bent like a reed in the wind" (241); "Retribution had overtaken Sir Francis in the form of a proud, ill-tempered haughty wife, and he knew it" (242). When Mrs. Heathcote and her daughter Gertrude snub Sir Francis and his new bride, the narrator tells us that

Francis "fe[lt] for the first time in his life, that, although he was the owner of St. Catherine's Court, he might still be an object of contempt" (243). And we are told that "Sir Francis was little beloved at the Court, and the whole neighborhood rang with stories of the fierce temper and haughty pride of Lady Riversdale" (250). Mrs. Heathcote, on the other hand, who had insisted before the "ruinous" debt that her daughter marry Sir Francis, learns a valuable lesson from Sir Francis's misery: "She had learned that one true and noble heart was worth a thousand titles" (246). Of course, Fairlie's "true and noble heart," we must remember, isn't really what the narrative has highlighted throughout the novel; it is the work of his *hands* which gives him that heart.

In Marianne Farningham's novel *The Cathedral's Shadow*, we see a character who is rather similar to Mr. Fairlie, similar in the respect that he is a completely idealized version of an upper middle-class man--and his name also contains the word "fair": Mr. Fairholt. These two working-class women writers seem to have constructed near-utopian situations for their working-class characters; I say "near" utopian because these are certainly not successful socialist revolutions. Instead, they are situations grounded in a certain "realism" for their post-Chartist, post-Owenite time period, as well as in the "realism" of the Victorian novel. However, these male characters most certainly *are* idealized

figures, and yet they are not *presented* as idealized or unusual; they are merely the embodiment of "fairness," "fair" treatment of the classes of people below them. Their behavior is simply respectable, not extraordinary, and yet it has enormous impact. The implication becomes that in order for a middle- or upper-class man to *be* respectable, he must at the very least follow the example or these two characters, who are, after all, not extraordinarily generous. In both novels the material conditions of the characters are vastly improved, and, in turn, the implication is that such a situation is the "fair," respectable one.

In Farningham's novel, we have no "rough" aristocratic character such as Sir Francis who is set up in contrast to the respectable upper middle-class man. We do have two men of differing classes, however. Mr. Swaisland is the foreman of the local factory. (P.J. Keating, author of *The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction*, would consider this character at the top of the working-class "hierarchy.") His daughter, Mary Swaisland, is the heroine of the novel, but the plot focuses mainly on Mary's friend, "Mrs. Marah," who rents rooms where the Swaislands live. This woman is really the wife of Mr. Fairholt, the "new proprietor" (3) of the factory Swaisland works in; she had left her husband years before and been living under a different name. She is Catholic and before their marriage lied to her husband about

her religion, assuming she would be able to convert. However, she returns to Catholicism, and her husband learns of her initial dishonesty. They argue and separate. When Fairholt moves to town, his wife and he at first do not know the other lives there as well. Basically, the plot of the novel revolves around how the couple eventually becomes reconciled.

What is so striking about the novel is that Fairholt's taking over proprietorship of the factory results in great and rapid changes. In fact, one might say that "fairness" takes "holt" when Fairholt arrives. He immediately is shocked by the fact that *children* are working in the factory instead of attending school: "There shall be no child-labor in my factory" (4), he declares, and the entire factory resounds with the workers' cheers. When Swaisland informs him of the possible consequences--"'But . . . that change will be a difficult one to make. The people here depend very much upon the few shillings earnt every week by the children, and they imagine that the family income will be insufficient without them" (5)--Fairholt responds by immediately raising the adult workers' salaries. He thus ensures that the children can now attend school (most likely a Sunday School or day school), and he even has Swaisland buy a piece of land for the "recreation" of the workers, and especially for their children (16). Fairholt also hires "a 'ready room'" and stocks it with "good and interesting

literature for the people to enjoy, free of expense" (36), "with plenty of tea and coffee, but no ruinous and intoxicating drinks" (36).

One could argue that Fairholt is trying to "condition" his workers away from "rough" and towards "respectable" behavior, which is no doubt the case, but to view this as simply his exertion of "bourgeois" power over the workers or his infusing of them with "bourgeois" values is highly problematic. While Fairholt does make the choices here, he does so not in order to *continue* having that power; rather, he says "[his] hope is in the children" (100), in the "next generation" (100), that their social conditions will be improved. In fact, his emphasis on education and reading could actually serve to undermine capitalist goals. And he takes the children *out* of the factory. Having an entire "generation" of educated, well-read, cultured young adults might not bode well for supplying a factory with cheap, unskilled, uneducated workers in the future. And although many factory owners during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries worked to ensure "the psychological revolution which accompanied and made possible the industrial revolution" (Laqueur 242), although "the creation of a mass reading public made possible the manipulation of thoughts and opinions on a scale hitherto impossible" (242), as Laqueur points out, we must also remember that

"[w]orking-class radicalism was predicated on literacy" (242).

A brief comparison with Gaskell's novel *North and South* is in order here, for that novel presents us with a character who makes improvements in a factory that bolster, rather than undermine, capitalist goals. The changes that Mr Thornton brings about seem like pale shades of those that Fairholt implements. For example, while Fairholt raises *all* of the adult workers' salaries so that their children can attend school, Thornton, while he eventually revises slightly his views that the workers, who strike for higher wages, really "want to be masters, and make their masters into slaves" (162), he never *does* raise their salaries. He merely helps out one worker--Nicholas Higgins, a "reformed" union activist--by giving him work at the low wages that the workers has struck against in the first place and by "put[ting] one or two of the children in whom [Higgins] is interested to school" (444). The only way he helps the other workers is by "building [them] a dining room" (444) and helping them with a sort of food "collective" that enables them to eat less expensively on their meager salaries; however, they must "pay [him] rent for the oven and cooking-places at the back of the mill: and will have to pay more for the dining-room" (446), so one must wonder how much money this "collective" actually saves the workers. Thornton's interests in Higgins and in the dining hall are

most certainly linked to supporting his capitalist enterprise. When he hires Higgins, he warns him, "the first time I catch you making mischief, off you go" (405), "mischief" referring, of course, to union organizing. The dining hall itself, where he occasionally joins "his men," might at first seem like a site where the "master" and his workers meet on "equal" ground: as Mr Bell notes, there is "'[n]othing like the act of eating for equalising men'" (446), but when Thornton reveals that "'[t]he advantages were mutual'" of his "friendship" with "his men" (524), that mutuality becomes suspect, given the very differing positions of power Thornton and "his men" hold.

Rather than providing "his men" with higher wages and literacy as Fairholt does--both of which are significant factors in workers' organizing for *their own* interests--Thornton "teaches" them that their "mutual" and "common interests" lie with *him*. That the "personal intercourse" he calls for between the classes is really about serving his own ends is apparent in the following passage, in which Thornton explains to Mr Colhurst the theories behind his "experiments" with the workers:

> 'I have arrived at the conviction that no mere institution, however wise, . . . can attach class to class as they should be attached, unless the working out of such institutions bring individuals of the different classes into personal contact. Such intercourse is the very breath of life. A working man can hardly *be made to feel and know* how much his employer may have laboured in his study at the plans *for the benefit of his workpeople*. . . . But I would take an idea . . .

> [and] at every hitch interest would be felt by an increasing number of men, and at last its success in working come to be desired by all, as all had borne a part in the formulation of the plan; and even then I am sure that it would lose its vitality . . . as soon as it was no longer carried on by that sort of *common interest* . . . .' (525, emphasis mine)

It is apparent that the one with power and agency in this description of "intercourse" between the classes is the master, who "ma[kes]" his workers "feel and know" that his plans are really for "the[ir] benefit," are really in everyone's "common interest." The workers only have secondary input; they do not "ma[k]e" the master "feel" or "know" anything from the outset. In fact, Thornton's motives become even clearer when he tells Colthurst that such "experiments" "may render strikes not the bitter, venomous sources of hatred they have hitherto been" (526); in short, the reason for "mak[ing]" the master and his workmen "understand each other" and "like each other more" (525) is really to diffuse the revolutionary potential of workers' strikes. Fairholt's actions, on the other hand, sow the seeds for such future revolutionary action.

Farningham's novel does not construct the working class as needing to be "made to feel and know" that the master's "plans" are really for their "benefit." In fact, the working-class is presented in the following instance as rejecting such a "benefit" and "mak[ing]" the "master"--in this case the "mistresses"--"feel and know" what would really "benefit" them. Fairholt has help from the Swaisland

daughters, Mary and Kate, who begin work with the poor women at the same time Fairholt begins implementing his improvements. These women are portrayed as suspicious of the two young women's ability to do them any real good, and by "real" I mean *materially* versus morally, because *that* is the criterion the women use: for example, one woman says,

> 'Yes, Miss, them thoughts is beautiful for gentlefolks as has time to think them; but you see we are slaving from morning to night as hard as we can go, and only then earn just enough to keep body and soul together, and we have no time to think about 'responsibilities', and 'missions', and them things. . . . If you will tell us how to make a farthing go as far as a half-a-crown, you will help us indeed.' (101)

Mary and Kate listen to the women and, in the end, help them to make a farthing "go as far as" 18 pence: "I think we did in many cases, and that good resulted from it," Mary says. Thus, the narrative demonstrates the material reasons behind the "respectable" working-class behavior of thrift. The moral imperative is scorned by the poor women as completely untenable, and the more class-privileged women are required to learn and read from *their* perspective. Fairholt also learns and reads this way, for he raised the wages of the workers, thus ensuring that they "earn [*more than*] just enough to keep body and soul together" (101).

In fact, by the close of the novel, the entire town is transformed, and it is clear that the peoples' desire to improve their material conditions is an important factor, not just morality. We learn that with the encouragement and

help of Mr. Fairholt, "[the] day-schools and evening-schools, [the] mother's meetings and working societies, [the] savings banks and friendly societies" of the working-class people "prospered" (310). What fails is the power of the priests to lure people under "the Cathedral's shadow"; these priests can have no power, the narrator tells us, as long as the people can "read for themselves" (311). Thus, the novel ends with the notion that literacy is a means of empowerment for working-class people, and while it is also a means of instilling middle- and upper-class values, we must keep both possibilities in mind, just as the novel demonstrates that morality and self-image, or "respectability," are intricately linked up with material circumstances. The novel also upholds more of what Raymond Williams terms a "working-class" versus a "bourgeois culture," for while the latter involves an individualist "idea of service" towards society, in the "working-class" version, "[d]evelopment and advantage are not individually but commonly interpreted. . . . Improvement is sought . . . in the general and controlled advance of all. . . . Not the individual, but the whole society, will move" (*Culture* 325-26). We see such collective "movement" in Farningham's text.[43]

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[43] Gaskell's *North and South*, however, represents more of a "bourgeois culture," in that only individuals--Higgins, Thornton, Margaret Hale--and not the "whole society" of the novel "move."

And now that I have finally arrived at and spoken on my subject, I fear that my own "respectability" is in jeopardy. I fear that I have strayed too far from my subject; placed my body *too much* in the way; spoken too little of constructions of subjectivity in these working-class Victorian women's novels. I've only discussed three of them, and not in enough detail. My reading isn't close enough. The actual books are too far away. But the voices remain: the voices of working-class subjects presenting their version of working-class identity. And those voices are very real; I can hear them, just as I can hear those of my working-class friends back home. I hear Toni saying, "It's symbolism over substance, that's all it is," referring to politicians, intellectuals, all those who have power in this society over her. And perhaps it *is* all symbolism--*their* version of symbolism, a version that never gets to substance, to materiality; a version that traps the working classes inside a theoretical machine, one that determines their material reality. Any attempt to move outside that machine is labelled "bourgeois complicity" by some, "insurrection" by others. Either way, we don't belong anywhere but inside that machine. At least that's what *their* voices say, voices that I have internalized, one's that grow louder when I speak in the academy of my working-class identity. But the more I speak, I, a single, individuated subject, about that identity, the more

collective it becomes; the more I begin to hear other voices that are *not* other--Toni's, my mother's, Marianne Farningham's--and from these voices, these words, a material place begins to take shape, a place that is dangerous, with its rough beginnings and endings, yet a place that is the most empowering of all. It is a place where I belong, where the words "I belong here" are real; a place that is mine.

And I'm beginning to claim that place, even within the academy, but such a claim *is* incredibly dangerous--at least as long as it involves making visible the *materiality* of my class position and that of so many other poor and working-class people. I am painfully aware that the "body" I have "placed in the way" will probably be read as a rough, "grotesque body," one that can have no respectable place in the academy, especially in a reading of literary texts. My placing it here may ultimately *displace* it, in that I may not acquire a job within the academy because I have failed to follow the rules of the game. But I am tired of that game, and I don't want to "play" poststructuralism anymore. I don't want to keep "playing" class as if it were a mere "congealment of discourses" (Cotter 230). To destroy class exploitation, we must, as Jennifer Cotter contends, "transform the socio-economic structures that give rise to and perpetuate it" (230). One of those "structures" can be found in the academy itself, which, as my working-class sister academic Joanna Kadi reminds me, is "established to

keep people like me out, and to keep middle- and upper-class people in" (92-93). She asks, and I ask with her, "If working-class people suddenly began earning university degrees in large numbers, who would work the lines, scrub the toilets, descend into the mines? Would we remain in the places others have prepared for us?" (92-93). And with her I respond, "I do not believe we would" (93). And with her I say, because with her I have the courage to say it, "No longer do I walk around a university campus hearing the voice in my head say 'I don't belong here.' A great deal of the time the voice says 'I belong wherever I choose to go'" (95). And with her,

> I search for words/knowledge that will tell of these things that happened to me and my community. The oppressors did their job well. Our conquered selves stayed away from places where we were not welcome, from visions we were not supposed to dream, from hallowed university halls we were meant to walk down only with a mop and pail. But the conquered self can be defeated. The oppressors did not count on our tackling the bitter fruits of their labor with fervor, anger, passion, and love of self. We were never meant to survive. We were never meant to flourish, to rise triumphant from the battlefield of a war we never declared, to live as we desire and to belong in any place we choose. But we are (beginning to) do all those things. I believe such flourishing holds the seeds of true revolution. (95)

Don't you know, they're talkin' about a revolution. It sounds like a whisper. Don't you know, they're talkin' about a revolution. It sounds like a whisper. While they're standing in the welfare lines, crying at the doorsteps of those armies of salvation, wasting time in the unemployment lines, sitting around waiting for a promotion. Don't you know they're talkin' about a revolution. It sounds like a whisper. Poor people gonna rise up and get their share. Poor people gonna rise up and take what's theirs. Don't you know you

better run run run run run run run run . . . .? Oh I said you better run run run run run run run run . . . . (Chapman)

CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

> I think that you may object that in all this I have made too much of the importance of material things. (Woolf 106)
>
> If you feel that don't have to fight for me, that you don't have to speak out against capitalism, the exploitation of human and natural resources, then you in your silence, your inability to make connections, are siding with a system that will eventually get you, after it has gotten me. (Woo 144)
>
> To get rid of class exploitation it is necessary to transform the socio-economic structures that give rise to and perpetuate it. (Cotter 230)
>
> Yet, I am arguing here, it is only by using the kinds of correctives that would come from putting 'policy' into cultural studies that . . . [we] may . . . [resist] the lure of those debates whose contrived appearance of ineffable complexity makes them a death trap for practical thinking. (Bennett 33)

Rhetoric calling for a "revolutionary" transformation of the academy is all well and good, but as Tony Bennett argues, we need "practical thinking" and action if we are to break the silence Merle Woo claims "sid[es] with [the] system" and then actually "*transform*" that "system," as Jennifer Cotter says we must, to stop the class exploitation reproduced by the academy. If "resistance postmodernism insists on a materialist political practice that works for equal access for all to social resources and for an end to the exploitative exercise of power" (887), as Teresa Ebert

contends, then we need to begin formulating the *practical* policies that might begin such work. We must start producing the means to keep in as well as bring into the academy the very raced, gendered, and classed subjects of our discourses, "rather than endlessly contriv[ing] to organize subjects which exist only as the phantom effects of [our] own rhetorics" (Bennett 29).

But such a project is enormous, of course, and requires an understanding that the ideal may be so far removed from the "reality" that it will appear at times as other worldly, as only inhabited by such "phantoms." As Raymond Williams explains, this project "would involve, *in any real world*, the removal of all the material obstacles to just this form of participation"; thus, we would need to "chang[e] the educational system from its dominant pattern of sorting people, from so early an age, into 'educated' people and others," into middle- and upper-class people and working-class and poor people ("The Idea" 36). Removing all of these "obstacles" and "changing the educational system" require far more than those of us in the academy who are committed to multiculturalism and diversity could ever accomplish. However, focusing upon concrete, practical policies that might move us one step closer to these goals *can* help us to bring a certain "weightiness" to our phantom dreams and to the emphemeral, disembodied subjects of so much of our scholarly rhetoric. Thus, while I present here

only a handful of suggestions that might begin to ground these dreams, I hope that they will be translated into more of a *presence* through the actions of the embodied subjects who read, and thus rewrite, this text.

Such a translation, however, requires a willingness to face the fact that those of us committed to multiculturalism--feminists included--may not have done what Adrienne Rich asks of us in "Taking Women Students Seriously": "remember[ed] that every mind resides in a body; remain[ed] accountable to the female [or male] bodies in which we [and our students] live" (28). We may not want to remember, to be accountable; we may find that it's too painful. But as Cherríe Moraga says, "it is in looking at the nightmare that the dream is found" (34). Some of what I have presented in this dissertation is indeed "nightmarish"--especially the painful material effects of class oppression on the real embodied subjects inside and outside of the academy. But we must first "look at" these effects in order to find ways to alleviate at least a few of them. We must begin to acknowledge that *how* our students experience the academy through their *bodies* is as important as how they experience it through their minds. Being "sensitive" to the multiculturalist, diverse subjectivities of our students must include a sensitivity to what allows them or prevents them from being present bodily as well as intellectually in the academy.

One way to begin might be to recognize that how successful our students are at acquiring the economic capital necessary to enter and remain in the academy is directly related to how successful we will be in teaching them, in performing our jobs. Most instructors, as well as most chairs of departments, know very little about the workings of the financial aid office at their institution. That office is considered separate, irrelevant to the department or the individual classroom. We need to begin understanding the workings of this office and formulating ties to it that will enable us to better teach our students. Few instructors realize that most students on financial aid must go weeks if not months without the money they need to purchase books or other supplies, let alone pay for basic necessities of life such as rent, utilities, food, clothing, and medical care. If instructors examine the policies of the financial aid office and discover that those policies interfere with their ability to teach--students obviously cannot learn without books; they cannot concentrate if they are hungry or ill--then they must explain to their department chairs and their college deans that these policies are impeding their ability to teach certain students (usually including a number of the older students and/or students of color so supposedly sought after to attain "diversity" in the academy).

Instructors, department chairs, and deans could work together to exert pressure on those overseeing the financial aid policies of the university to accomplish changes in those policies that would ensure that financial aid recipients have *at least* the basic necessities for learning that more class-privileged students have. For example, given the increasing participation, indeed the control, that corporate America has in the public university system, we might use that participation in a way that benefits the very people most oppressed by the capitalist system: the poor and working classes. More and more we see private businesses springing up on the public ground of the academy--the food service industry in particular, but also book stores and other businesses selling school supplies. We might offer such businesses incentives by asking that they offer "credit" to financial aid recipients; through computerized means, these students could use their student IDs to purchase products, the cost of which would then be subtracted from the financial aid that they would (eventually) receive. After all, financial aid offices ensure that students qualify for aid well before they ever receive it, and they make certain that students are enrolled for the sufficient number of credit hours; even students who must withdraw from school for medical reasons are not forced to pay back their aid unless they have withdrawn from two semesters already. Campus businesses would have the safety

net of guaranteed repayment by the government, just as banks have had that guarantee when loaning far greater sums of money to students.

And the types of businesses involved need not be restricted to those on campus. Just as doctors and hospitals enrolled in Medicaid and Medicare programs are reimbursed by the government for the services they render, local businesses--including, in particular, rental agencies and grocery stores--could offer services to those students receiving government aid. Universities could take bids from the various businesses, contracting out to those that offer the least expensive yet highest quality products. Since university officials would have control over which businesses are chosen, they could opt for smaller, community-based establishments, especially those operated by white women and people of color--thus merging a commitment to diversity on campus with one to the community in general; this extension of multiculturalism outside of the walls of the academy could begin to build important, concrete connections between the university and the town in which it "lives."

With this type of interaction between private business and public education, students on financial aid would no longer be constructed merely as "burdens" on society who often fail to live up to the help that they are so generously given. (Many "drop" out of college and are

viewed as "quitters," as failures, rather than as victims of a system that has failed *them*.) Instead, these students would be seen as assets to the university and the community for having a part in the economic growth of the town or city in which the university is located. In addition, because the university would be more actively participating in rendering payments for the actual, specific costs of university attendance, all of those costs would be meticulously documented and more readily open to examination and study. Students and university officials could more easily *prove* to state and federal government whether or not allotted amounts of financial aid are sufficient. Concrete evidence could be obtained for raising those amounts when necessary; thus, the materiality of class subjectivity in the academy would become more *visible*. And because the community would have greater involvement in the "life" of the university and vice versa, people who might not otherwise have access to the cultural capital involved with university enrollment--for example, knowledge of how to enroll and receive financial aid--would have greater chances of encountering that knowledge by witnessing students "purchasing" their educational capital at local grocery stores, apartment complexes, even at the bus stops of the local transit system.

Indeed, bringing more members of the community into the university system is crucial to achieving the "equal access

for all to social resources" that Ebert envisions. We might first begin, however, with the recognition of those very members who are already in the university system, but who are not there in a way that will necessarily allow them to attain such "social resources": the blue collar and white collar, low-paid staff workers of the university itself. While many universities have programs established that are meant to provide their staff workers with access to higher education--for example, courses offered at low-cost or no tuition--one must consider not only tuition as an impediment to enrollment. Many staff members are not offered time off *with pay* to attend one or two classes a semester; they must attend night classes (many of which are not even offered frequently enough to allow a person to complete a degree) and give up money out of their paychecks for missed time on the job--money most could not possibly afford to give up. In addition, many staff workers must live on the outskirts of a town or city to afford decent housing; they often travel 45 minutes or an hour to the university each way. Those with children would need to go home after work, make dinner, do household chores, and somehow get back to campus in time for a seven or eight o'clock night class--an impossibility if they don't live close to campus, as most of the more "traditional" students do.

True access to university education for staff would thus involve far more than just free tuition; it would

require paid time off from work *during the daytime* to attend classes, or, if at night, childcare facilities and transportation of the children to those facilities. Such policies may seem a bit much, but not if one considers the hypocrisy involved, for example, when feminist instructors call for theory/practice to empower *all* women, yet do little to empower the very secretaries in their departments whose work supports their own, or the janitorial workers who scrub the floors of their classrooms or the toilets of the bathrooms they use. The "other" woman works in the same halls, the same offices, the same rooms that we do. Feminist instructors and administrators, especially those involved in Women's Studies programs, could pressure university officials to enact policies that would provide *real* access to higher education for staff workers. Students of these instructors could also be encouraged to exert such pressure and thus to put into *practice* the class and race aspects--not merely the gender component--of the class, race, and gender triad that their feminist theory espouses.

In fact, instructors, especially of Women's Studies courses, could also utilize projects and assignments in their classes that would require community involvement and activism of their students which might help, not only university staff workers, but other members of the community at large--for example, a project requiring examination of a problem affecting poor and working-class women of the

community and a proposed concrete, practical solution that can actually be implemented. Students could come up with projects that help with prenatal care (one of my students wrote a detailed letter to a congressman asking him to propose a bill for a one-cent tax on diapers to fund such care); with domestic violence and sexual assault (another of my students has received the approval of the State Attorney's Office to create a program in which law students receive college credit to work as crime victim advocates for battered women and sexual assault victims); with breast cancer (another student forged an alliance between the American Cancer Society and a state-wide chain of grocery stores to provide information stands in those stores stocked with pamphlets on breast cancer prevention--information that many poor women might not otherwise receive); with child sexual abuse (one young woman, a medical student, devised a project that involved other medical students teaching professionals such as teachers how to spot the signs of such abuse); and the list could go on and on. Advanced undergraduate students could even receive internship credit for teaching community education courses in their majors, thus preparing adult community members for college. The possibilities of using the academy as a site in which to transform the distribution of resources in our society are limitless.

All that is needed is a willingness on our part *to work together* for such transformative policies. The academy may be an Ideological State Apparatus that reproduces the capitalist class structure of our society and the dominant ideology that fuels that structure, but it is also a site of enormous potential for subversion of that structure and ideology. Multiculturalism and diversity need not be mere "phantom effects of [our] own rhetorics" (Bennett 29); they can be *lived*, embodied dreams that have enough weight, enough substance, to till and transform the material ground on which the academy resides, as well as to transform politically, spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually those of us who *already* belong in the academy--those of us who, with good reason, already consider it our home.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

I attended East Pennsboro High School in Enola, Pennsylvania, but I was forced to drop out as soon as I turned sixteen because of my family's poverty. (My father was disabled, and I had to take on a full-time job in a nursing home.) I took and passed the G.E.D. exam in November of 1981, one day after my father's funeral. Although I still worked between 60 and 75 hours per week, I began attending Harrisburg Community College in May of 1983, taking two or three classes per semester. In July of 1984, I moved to Ft. Lauderdale, FL, where I lived with my brother Richard, attended Broward Community College, and worked full-time. I served as managing editor of the student newspaper, receiving state-wide awards in news reporting and investigative reporting. After graduating in August of 1985 with an A.A. degree with high honors and the departmental award in journalism, I transferred to the University of Florida as a journalism major. I switched to English in the Spring term of 1986 and in December of 1987 received a B.A. degree in English with high honors.

Although I wanted to attend graduate school elsewhere (one is *not* supposed to earn all of her degrees from the

same school), because of poor health and poverty, I remained at UF. My grade point average upon graduation was a 3.88 on a 4.0 scale, and I was elected to Phi Beta Kappa in March of 1988. I am aware that with such credentials I might have been accepted to the English graduate program of an Ivy League school, but even with scholarships, the cost would have been far too great. I received my Master of Arts degree in English from UF in May of 1990. I maintained a 4.0 grade point average throughout the master's program and wrote a thesis entitled, *A Daughter's Position on Woolf, Brontë, and Oliphant: Refusing to Theorize over Our Mother-Writers' Graves.* I was accepted into the doctoral program in English that same Spring, and I have maintained a 4.0 grade point average throughout all of my doctoral coursework.

I have held a teaching assistantship throughout my years in graduate school, teaching ten different courses, including the core course for the Women's Studies major. I have also worked numerous other jobs to support myself and to pay for outrageously high medical bills. In August of 1993 I received the first scholarship money I have ever been awarded throughout my college years, despite repeatedly applying for such money: the 1993 Kirkland Research Grant, which allowed me to travel to London for three weeks to research working-class Victorian women fiction writers. I also received the Kirkland Dissertation Fellowship in the

Spring of 1995, which allowed me, for the first time since I was fourteen years old, not to work while attending school. I was denied student loans this summer, however, because of that fellowship, and I have had to work four times the number of hours I usually work in the summer to support myself and pay my bills--all while trying to finish this dissertation. Fortunately, I was offered and accepted a faculty position at UF as a Lecturer in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and will begin that job--the first I've ever had that will provide me with medical insurance and a decent salary--on August 11, 1995. I attained all of these college degrees because I desperately wanted out of poverty. I do not believe, however, that a human being should have to work so hard for an education--nearly to the point of death--just because she is born into poverty. But I was not going to drop out--or be pushed out--this time. And I will work just as hard for the rest of my life to provide others with an education, especially those from the poor and working classes; they, more than anyone else, need that education.

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Elizabeth Langland, Chair
Professor of English

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Patricia Craddock
Professor of English

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Chris Snodgrass
Associate Professor of English

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Donald Ault
Professor of English

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Ofelia Schutte
Professor of Philosophy

This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of English in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate School and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

December 1995

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Dean, Graduate School

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